

Public Transport in Moldova: Integrating Gender, Disability, and Climate Change Response

Editor: **Keystone Moldova**

Chișinău, 2025

[305+351.81](478):303.4
M 17

The research “Public transport in Moldova: Integrating Gender, Disability, and Climate Change Response” was conducted by Keystone Moldova with financial support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) as part of the Gender-Responsive Budget Monitoring Network II project, implemented in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.

The authors are exclusively responsible for the content of this publication, and the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the Austrian Development Agency or the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Authors:
Ludmila Malcoci, PhD habilitate in Sociology, Research Professor, Executive Director, Keystone Moldova
Alexandru Gribincea, PhD in Economics, Project Coordinator, Keystone Moldova

Editor: **Keystone Moldova**

Descrierea CIP a Camerei Naționale a Cărții din Republica Moldova

Malcoci, Ludmila.

Public Transport in Moldova: Integrating Gender, Disability, and Climate Change Response / Ludmila Malcoci, Alexandru Gribincea. – Chişinău : Keystone Moldova, 2026. – 86 p. : fig. color.

Cerinţe de sistem: PDF Reader.

Aut. indicaţi pe verso p. de tit. – Referinţe bibliogr. în subsol. – With financial support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

ISBN 978-5-86654-658-9 (PDF).

© Keystone Moldova

With funding from
Austrian Development Cooperation
Gender Budget Watchdog Network
for a gender equal region
KEYSTONE MOLDOVA
Sweden Sverige

Public Transport in Moldova: Integrating Gender, Disability, and Climate Change Response

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS **5**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **6**

INTRODUCTION **9**

CHAPTER 1: The interconnection between gender, transport, and climate change **13**

1.1. The climate perspective of transport 14

1.2. The growing importance of transport 15

1.3. Gender, disability, and transportation 19

CHAPTER 2: The response of policies and budgets to the gender dimension **23**

2.1. The Green Agenda, transportation, and their importance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 24

2.2. Country-level transport policies 25

2.3. Institutional framework and transport financing 26

CHAPTER 3: Transport behaviors: patterns and gender dimensions **31**

3.1. Accessibility of sidewalks and transportation 33

3.2. Use of means of transport 39

3.3. Perceptions of security and safety 54

3.4. Respondents' perceptions of transportation and climate change 58

CHAPTER 4: local practices for integrating gender, disability, and climate response **69**

4.1. Chisinau Municipality 70

4.2. Bălți Municipality 72

4.3. Ialoveni City 74

4.4. Orhei Municipality 77

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS **79**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA – Austrian Development Agency
AETSD – Eastern Alliance for Safe and Sustainable Transport
BRT – Bus Rapid Transit
CAM – Auto Club of Moldova
CAWI – Computer Assisted Web Interviewing
GBWN – Gender Budget Watchdog Network
GIS – Geographic Information System
MIDR – Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development
OCDE – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
WHO – World Health Organization
SMUP – Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan
NIPECC – National Integrated Plan for Energy and Climate Change
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
PUA – Urban Bus Park
RTEC – Chisinau Electric Transport Authority
Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UTA – Territorial-Administrative Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transport and its impact on the environment

- The transport sector is the biggest polluter in the Republic of Moldova. Vehicles generate approximately 86% of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Most cars and buses in the vehicle fleet are over 15 years old and exceed current emission standards. Traffic jams, especially in Chișinău, exacerbate the situation: engines that remain running in traffic emit even more pollutants. Renewable sources account for only a small part of the country's energy consumption (about 20%), so most of the electricity comes from fossil fuels. This makes the transition to „green" transport based on electric vehicles difficult. Although the share of electric or hybrid cars is growing (in 2024 they accounted for about 6.8% of the total, above the global average), the overall level remains low. Experts point out that, without the adoption of less polluting vehicles and fuels, air quality will continue to deteriorate, and the country's climate targets will not be met.

Accessibility and challenges of public transport

- Public transportation in Moldova does not adequately meet the needs of all citizens, especially women, people in rural areas, and people with disabilities. Women use public transport (buses, minibuses, taxis) for 76.5% of their travel time, compared to 40% for men, but many consider it inaccessible and unsafe. Thus, 35% of women rate sidewalks as „not at all accessible," while only 21% of men share this opinion. In addition, the percentage of women who consider taxis and buses to be „very accessible" is lower, with only a quarter expressing this opinion.
- Many women avoid night buses or walking in dark areas for fear of being harassed or attacked. In cities, women often feel at risk when using electric scooters or walking at night.
- Bus stops and sidewalks are often not equipped with ramps, elevators, or adapted inclines. Although the new trolleybuses in Chișinău include access ramps, many of the stations and sidewalks remain uneven or inaccessible to wheelchair users. As a result, people with disabilities have great difficulty getting on minibuses, as they are not equipped with elevators or dedicated spaces for wheelchairs. Approximately one-third of people with disabilities report significant obstacles when leaving their homes, and half consider the journey to school or work to be dangerous.
- Access to public transport remains considerably more limited in rural areas than in urban areas. In villages, one-third of respondents (33%) describe public transport as „not accessible at all," compared to 27% of city residents. Furthermore, nearly 30% of people in rural areas mention the total lack of buses in their community, while this problem affects only 7% of the urban population. This deficiency exacerbates the social isolation of vulnerable groups – especially women and older people in villages – by severely restricting their access to employment opportunities, education, and essential medical services.

Transport, education and employment

- Mobility issues have a significant impact on access to education and the labor market. Although women in Moldova tend to be better educated – 76% of them attend university, compared to 53% of men – paradoxically, their employment rate is lower and their salaries are about 15% lower. This gap is explained not only by mobility barriers, but also by the fact that women are often forced to interrupt their careers to care for children and face reduced opportunities for advancement to leadership positions. For example, women with modest incomes or care responsibilities often cannot afford the cost of bus tickets or taxi rides, which significantly limits their professional options and access to better-paid jobs.
- If a woman is responsible for childcare, housework, and a low-paying job, expensive or unreliable public transportation can make it nearly impossible to work full-time or get a better job. Without a direct route or access to a personal car, many women can't get to work in the city every day.
- In villages, the impact is even more severe. Approximately 73% of women in rural areas do not own a car, compared to 66% in urban areas. Combined with poor roads and lack of transportation, this means that many families cannot reach universities or their workplaces. A survey showed that only half of women in villages can easily get to work or school in the city, and a third have no safe way to travel.
- The lack of accessible transportation severely limits the lives of people with disabilities. According to studies, half of people with disabilities said that traveling to another city is difficult, and 40% consider crossing the street to be unsafe. Many rely on assistance from others or remain isolated at home, missing out on educational or professional opportunities. Without ramps and safe crossings, even a short trip can be dangerous or impossible for people with disabilities.

Perceptions and use of alternative means

- Citizens' interest in environmentally friendly transport solutions, such as bicycles or electric cars, remains fairly low, and the use of these alternatives is limited. In 2024, electric or hybrid cars account for approximately 6.8% of all vehicles registered in the Republic of Moldova, a percentage above the global average. However, for many people, the high cost of these vehicles is a significant barrier, and the fact that electricity is largely produced from fossil fuels diminishes the real potential for reducing environmental impact.
- Very few people choose to use bicycles or scooters on a daily basis, mainly due to their high cost and lack of comfort. A recent survey reveals that 73% of women in rural areas do not own a car, and approximately 65% do not have access to a scooter, highlighting the financial constraints faced families in these areas. Even in places where bikes could be a viable alternative, safety remains a major obstacle: 84% of women consider walking to be „too slow," and half perceive electric scooters as „too dangerous." Narrow sidewalks, heavy traffic, and poor lighting discourage people from opting for alternative modes of transportation.
- Many people prefer traveling by car or minibus, as these are associated with status and reliability. Walking or cycling is seen as a last option. In the absence of safe bike lanes or workplace showers, urban commuters continue to use buses or taxis. Without incentives, safe infrastructure, and cultural changes, alternative transport will remain a marginal option in Moldova.

Recommendations:

To transform Moldova's transport system into a more sustainable and accessible one, the report proposes the implementation of integrated and coordinated measures:

- Developing a continuous and well-protected network of bike lanes, as well as expanding wide sidewalks in all cities, is essential to encourage active mobility. Currently, there are approximately 20 km of bike lanes in Chișinău, but they are fragmented and do not provide a continuous connection between neighborhoods or areas of major interest. Creating a coherent infrastructure linking major arteries, educational centers, and industrial areas would encourage both walking and cycling. Such a continuous network would reduce dependence on motorized transport, increase the safety of road users, and provide an accessible alternative for city residents, especially women, children, and people with reduced mobility.
- Investing in new, accessible trolleybuses and buses – nequipped with ramps for people with reduced mobility – is a priority for modernizing public transport. The implementation of dedicated lanes for public transport or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes would significantly reduce travel time, increasing reliability, and facilitating safe access for women, children, and people with disabilities. Also, expanding the electric trolleybus network (which currently has 31 routes in Chișinău) and replacing old diesel minibuses with eco-friendly vehicles would cut air pollution and increase the comfort and quality of public transport services, encouraging the shift to sustainable solutions.
- Modernizing stations and sidewalks to meet the needs of women and people with disabilities – installing ramps, tactile paving, and inclines at all stops, better street lighting, surveillance cameras, and security for nighttime safety. Training drivers on disability awareness and enforcing accessibility standards are essential.
- Rehabilitating drainage systems to prevent frequent flooding that paralyses traffic and endangers pedestrians. Levelling sidewalks and unblocking drains are vital for safety, especially for wheelchair users.
- Publishing transport budgets and detailed plans, including amounts allocated for accessibility and how projects address the needs of women and persons with disabilities. The report recommends the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data and citizen consultation in all major projects. It is worth noting that the Chisinau Mobility Strategy 2030 already includes the concept of „gender-sensitive planning".

INTRODUCTION

The research was conducted as part of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network, phase II initiative, carried out in both the Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova. The main goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor and analyze public budgets from a gender equality perspective, thereby promoting transparency, accountability, and the equal involvement of women and men in budgetary processes. Through advocacy mechanisms and constructive dialogue between authorities and civil society, the project supports the development of gender-sensitive public policies and contributes to reducing social inequalities.

Context and importance. Transport plays a fundamental role in economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Mobility patterns in Moldova are significantly influenced by gender dynamics, socio-economic status, and infrastructure availability. Women, persons with disabilities, and people in rural areas face unique challenges in accessing safe, affordable, and environmentally friendly transportation options. In addition, the transport sector contributes significantly to air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions, requiring a shift towards sustainable, gender-sensitive, and environmentally friendly mobility solutions. This study examines interconnections and aims to provide policy recommendations that integrate gender equity and climate resilience into transport planning in Moldova.

Purpose and objectives of the research. The purpose of the research follows from the importance and relevance of the issue and consists of analyzing gender-based mobility patterns in Moldova and assessing how transport policies, financing mechanisms, and infrastructure development address - or fail to address - the needs of different population groups.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- Identify key gaps in transport accessibility and safety for women, men, and persons with disabilities.
- Analyze the impact of current transport trends on the environment and linking them to climate goals.
- Analyze the extent to which national and local transport policies include measures adapted to gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Formulate concrete recommendations on integrating gender and climate dimensions into transport planning and public policy development.

Research hypotheses. Based on previous research and analysis of global transport trends, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Women and persons with disabilities face greater barriers to accessing transport services than men due to low safety levels, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic constraints that limit their mobility options.

- Moldova's public transport infrastructure is insufficiently adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, which significantly restricts their access to economic, social, and independent mobility opportunities.
- Rural residents face additional mobility challenges due to a lack of adequate connectivity to public transport networks, high travel costs, and poor road infrastructure quality. These difficulties particularly affect women and older people, limiting their access to essential services, economic opportunities, and social participation.
- The transition to environmentally friendly forms of transport, such as electric vehicles or the development of cycling infrastructure, is shaped by several factors, including the economic constraints of the population, the level of awareness of the benefits of green mobility, and the existence or lack of supportive policies and incentives from the authorities.

Therefore, this research aims to identify existing gaps in Moldova's public transport sector from a gender and climate perspective and to offer policy solutions that promote equitable and sustainable mobility. The findings will contribute to the current discourse on transport accessibility, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, providing a roadmap for Moldova's transition to a more inclusive and climate-resilient transport system.

Research methods and techniques. The research uses a mixed approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the transport sector in Moldova, as follows:

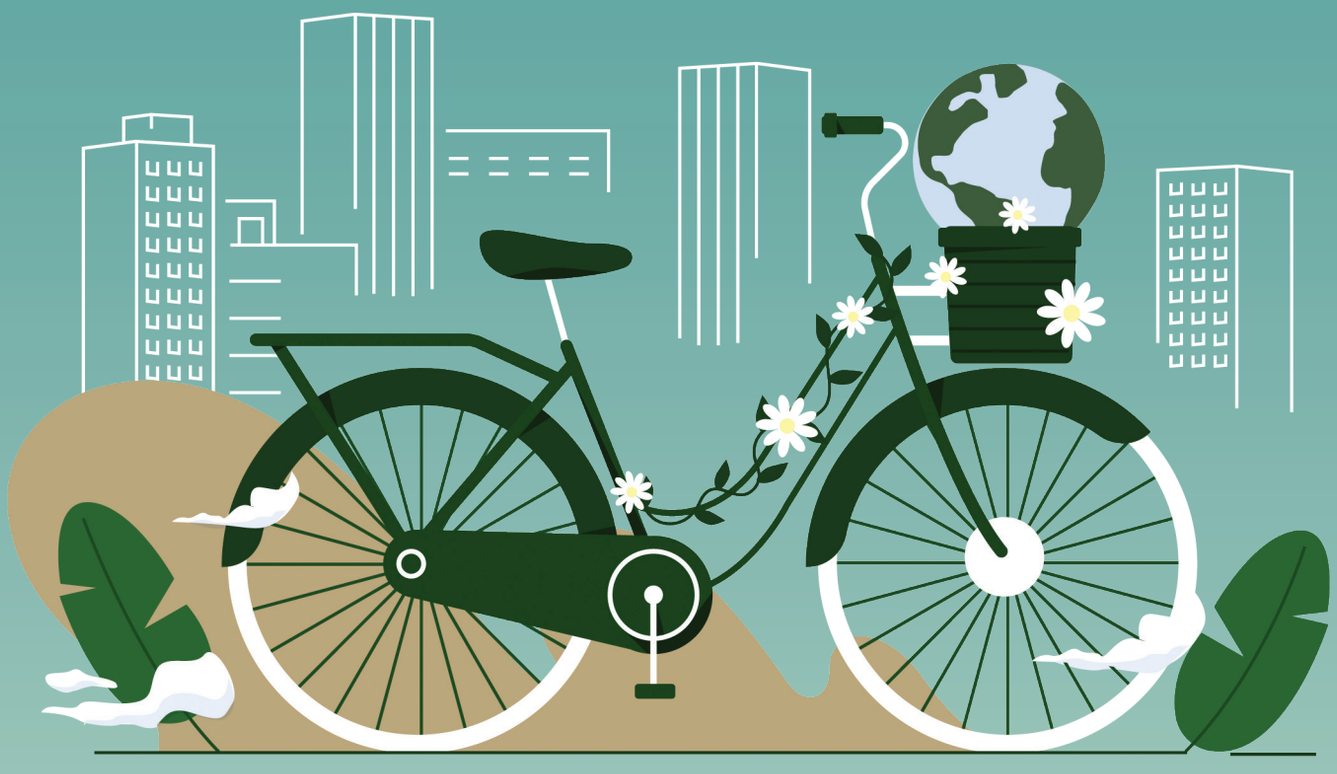
- Documentary analysis was used to examine review transport policies, human resources from a gender equality perspective, and climate strategies, with the aim of highlighting the main directions and gaps in current policies. This approach aimed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement in terms of integrating gender and climate dimensions into the transport sector.
- GIS mapping of transport networks to assess spatial accessibility and identify infrastructure gaps.
- Questionnaire survey[1]. The CAWI survey was the main source of primary data, which was subsequently analyzed to evaluate the responses of the 1,100 participants. They were segmented according to criteria such as gender, disability status, and place of residence (urban/rural) to highlight the differences and specific needs of each group.
- Key informant interviews were conducted with decision-makers, transport planners, gender experts, and representatives of disability advocacy groups.
- Case studies, which examined the most successful local practices in Chișinău, Bălți, Ialoveni, and Orhei to identify scalable solutions for sustainable and gender-equitable transport infrastructure.
- Comparative analysis, which was applied to assess Moldova's transport policies against the most successful international practices in gender-sensitive and environmentally friendly transport systems.

[1] The CAWI survey was managed by MNForce. The questionnaire took 30 minutes to complete. The data was collected in July 2024. The research was conducted on a sample of 1,100 people.

Gender responsive budgeting tools. The study used various specific gender responsive budgeting (GRB) tools, such as gender budget statements, analysis of how public budget benefits are distributed among women, men, and other groups, as well as financial planning frameworks that take gender differences into account. The aim was to verify whether the money spent on transport really meets the needs of all groups, not just a single segment of the population. In addition, gender budget audits were carried out to assess the effectiveness of spending and identify gaps in the financing of inclusive mobility solutions.

Limitations of the research:

- The distribution between rural (364 respondents) and urban (736 respondents) areas may not accurately reflect the actual proportion of the population in Moldova, with a potential for bias towards urban perspectives.
- The exact number of participants with disabilities is not specified directly, but can be deduced from the question regarding limitations in daily activities due to a health problem. According to the responses, 74 people indicated that they have "severe functional limitations" and 234 people "have functional limitations, but they are not severe." However, this question does not capture all dimensions of disability and may exclude people who do not self-identify as having functional limitations in daily life activities but who nevertheless have some form of disability.
- A major obstacle to the research was the lack of response from – the municipalities of Chișinău and Orhei to invitations for interviews with officials responsible for infrastructure, transport, and the budget. This situation limited access to official information on local policies, budget planning, and measures implemented in the field of transport. To mitigate this gap, discussions were held with local CSOs in these municipalities, which provided relevant information, although it could not fully replace official data. In addition, the research relied on the analysis of public documents and online sources, which, although they provide an overview, have limitations in terms of the timeliness and completeness of the information.



CHAPTER I

THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN GENDER, TRANSPORT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1.1. THE CLIMATE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSPORT

Transport contributes significantly to air pollution in the Republic of Moldova, especially in urban areas such as Chișinău and Bălți. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the transport sector accounts for up to 86% of total emissions in these regions. This is mainly due to the age and inefficiency of the national vehicle fleet, combined with Moldova's dependence on fossil fuels for transport. These factors worsen already critical levels of air pollution, directly affecting the quality of the environment and public health.[2]

One of the factors contributing to transport-related emissions in Moldova is the age of the vehicle fleet. Many vehicles on the roads are over 15 years old, and a significant proportion of public transport only complies with Euro I emission standards, which are outdated compared to current EU standards. These vehicles emit high levels of particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) and nitrogen oxides (NOx), which contribute significantly to urban air pollution and climate change. The absence of strict emission standards further aggravates the problem.

Urban congestion increases transport-related emissions. In cities such as Chișinău, traffic congestion leads to longer periods of vehicle stationary time and increased emissions of harmful pollutants. This situation has led to an increased incidence of health conditions associated with air pollution, such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

According to reports from the National Bureau of Statistics, urban residents are at greater risk of developing chronic diseases due to prolonged exposure to poor air quality, which places economic burdens on the healthcare system and reduces overall productivity.[3] The National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova highlights that pollutant emissions into the atmosphere pose a substantial risk to both the environment and public health.[4]

---

[2] OECD (2023). Moldova – Transport Brochure (Final). OECD Publishing. Available at: https://issuu.com/oecd.publishing/docs/moldova_transport_brochure_-_final?utm_source=

[3] WHO (2023). Environmental Health Country Profile: Republic of Moldova. World Health Organization. Disponibil la: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/environmental-health/environmental-health-mda-2023.pdf?utm_source=

[4] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova (2023). *Air emissions and waste – Metadata*. Available at: https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/Metadate/en/Air_emissions_waste_en.pdf?utm_source

Furthermore, the World Bank reports that the average annual exposure to PM2.5 in Moldova is 15.4 micrograms per cubic meter, exceeding the WHO recommended limit of 5 micrograms per cubic meter.[5]

Transition to electric transport. The implementation of electric transport in the Republic of Moldova presents many challenges, particularly due to the difficult energy situation over the last three years. One of the main problems is that most of the electricity consumed in the country is produced by the Cuciurgan power plant, located in Transnistria. This power plant mainly uses natural gas or coal, which are energy sources that produce high levels of carbon emissions.

At the same time, renewable energy makes a small contribution (20% of national consumption)[6], covering only a small part of the country's total energy consumption needs. This indicates a significant dependence on traditional energy sources, which limits Moldova's ability to support a rapid transition to large-scale electric transport.

If most of Moldova's transport were to switch to electricity, electricity demand would increase significantly, which could overload the current energy grid. Without sufficient renewable energy capacity, Moldova would need to import even more gas, thereby increasing its vulnerability to international price fluctuations and dependence on fuel imports.

1.2. THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORT

According to data from the Public Services Agency, there are over 987,000 licensed drivers in the country (all categories of driving licenses), approximately 750,000 of whom are men and over 238,000 women. In the field of driving licenses, statistics reveal a significant gender disparity, with 285,615 men and 208,615 women holding category B licenses.[7]

[5] World Bank (2024). *PM2.5 air pollution, mean annual exposure (micrograms per cubic meter) – Republic of Moldova.* Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.PM25.MC.M3?locations=MD&utm_source

[6] Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova (2024). *Winter record: over 20% of Moldova's electricity consumption covered by renewable sources*. Available at: https://www.energie.gov.md/ro/content/record-de-iarna-peste-20-din-consumul-de-energie-electrica-al-moldovei-acoperit-din-surse

[7] Știri.md (2020, September 29). *One million drivers in Moldova: How many female drivers do we have in the country?* Available at: https://stiri.md/article/social/un-milion-de-conducatori-auto-in-moldova-cate-soferite-avem-in-tara/

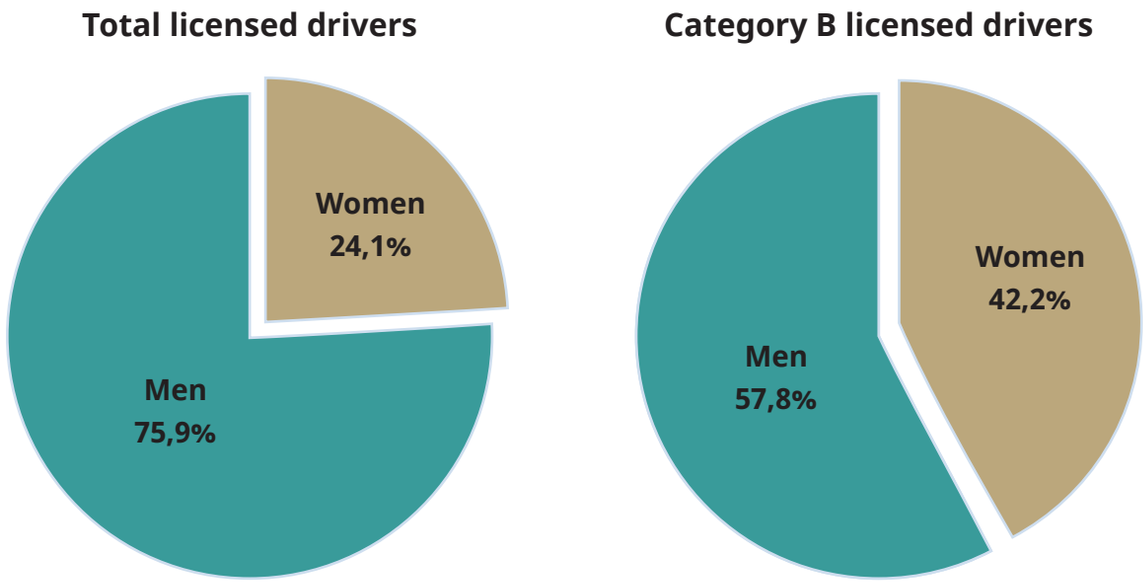


Fig. 1. Distribution of persons holding a driver's license in Moldova by gender, %

Source: Public Services Agency

In Moldova, 81.3% of cars (633,374) are owned by men, while only 18.7% (146,251) to by women, highlighting a significant difference in the distribution of owners by gender. These discrepancies are also evident in large urban centers such as Chișinău, where 75.4% of cars are owned by men and 24.6% by women (see Figure 2).

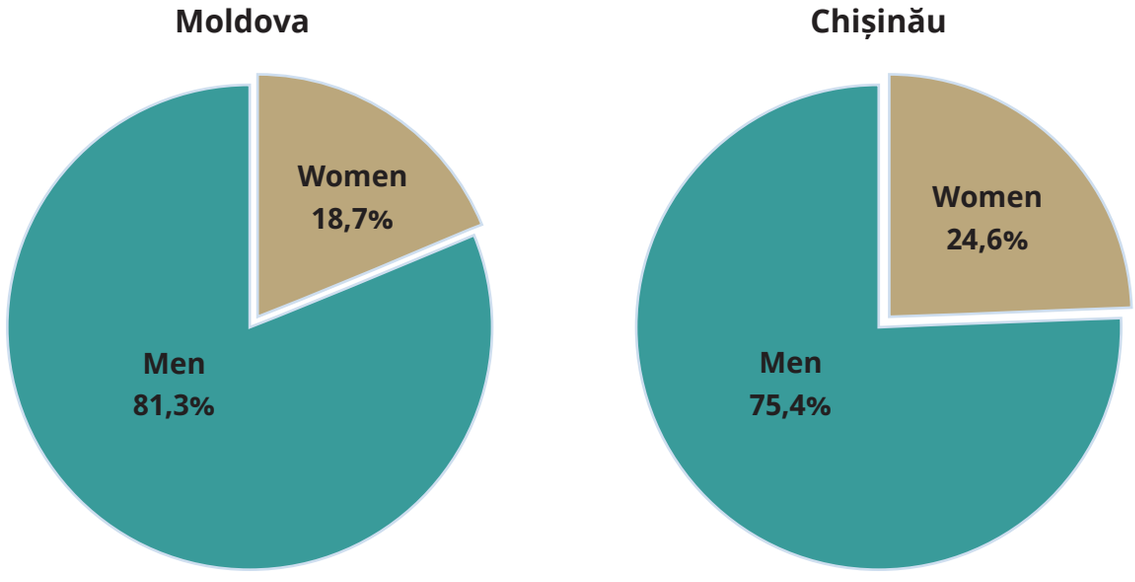


Fig. 2. Distribution of car owners in the Republic of Moldova and in Chișinău municipality by gender, %

Source: Public Services Agency

In medium-sized and small towns such as Bălți, Ialoveni, or Orhei (Figure 3), and in villages, the trends are similar, reflecting a gender imbalance in access to economic resources and mobility.

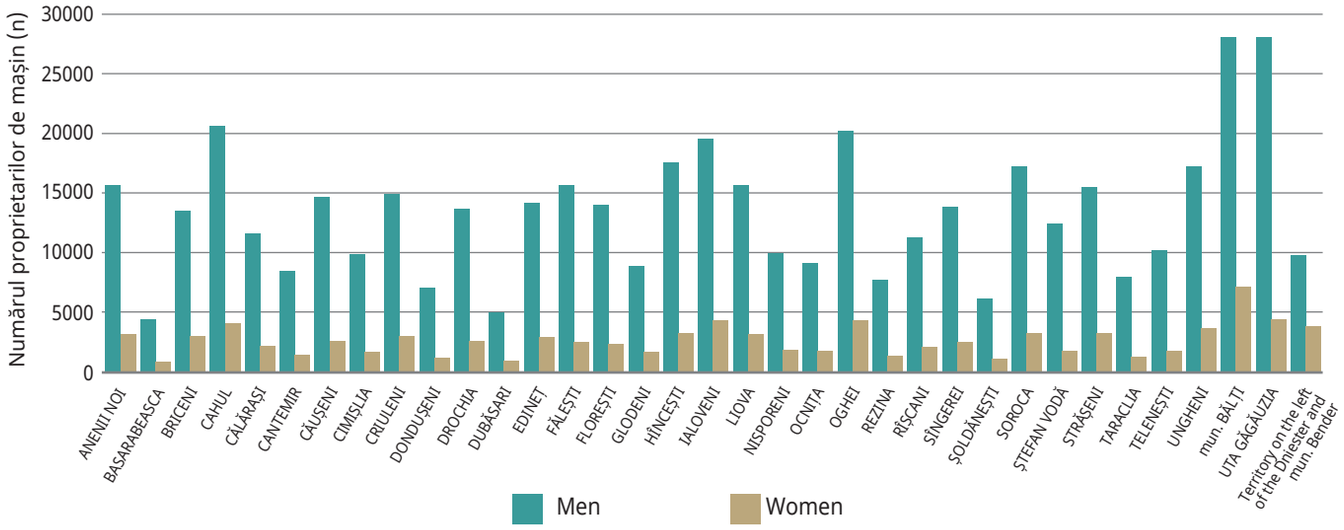


Fig. 3. Distribution of car owners in medium and small cities by gender, number

Source: Public Services Agency

Figure 4 shows the dynamics of the number of cars in circulation, as well as the so-called "ghost cars" in the Republic of Moldova, for the period 2010-2024. "Ghost cars" are vehicles that, although officially registered, are no longer actively used, do not generate revenue for the budget through taxes, and can become a road safety risk if they are driven without undergoing mandatory technical inspections. In contrast, the line corresponding to cars in circulation strictly reflects vehicles that are actually used on public roads.

The graph highlights a growing trend in the number of "ghost cars," which highlights the problems associated with the poor management of out-of-use cars. This phenomenon has negative effects on urban space and the environment, as abandoned cars not only occupy valuable public space but also contribute to environmental pollution. In addition, the increase in imports of second-hand cars exacerbates this problem, highlighting the need for strong policies on recycling and disposal of old vehicles in order to prevent the infrastructure and environmental crisis from worsening.

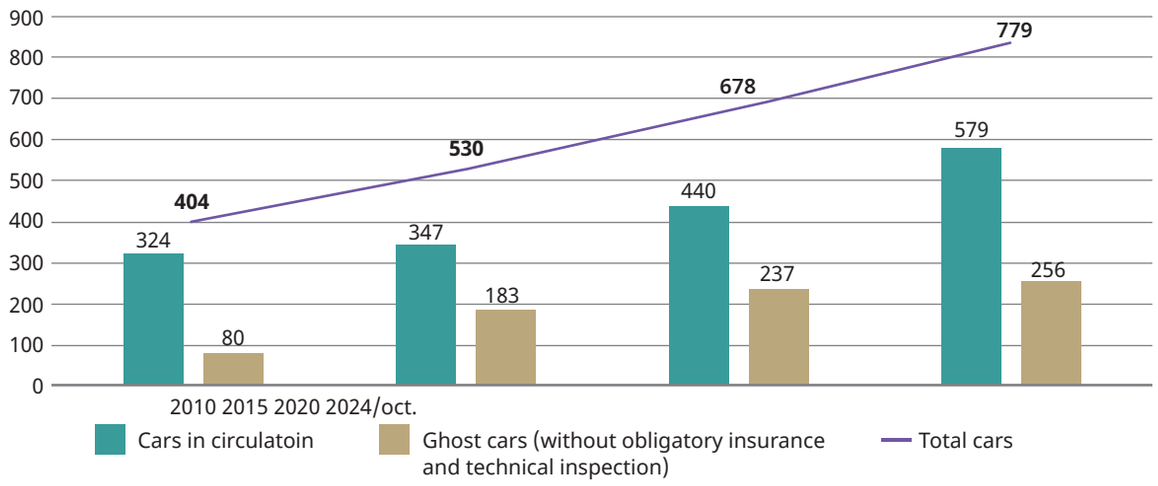


Fig. 4. Cars in circulation and "ghost cars" in Moldova, 2010-2024, thousands[8]

[8] Ioniță, V. (2024, 20 December). *#018 Economic Minute: Ghost cars – a real problem on Moldovan roads.* Taken from ionita.md: https://ionita.md/2024/12/20/018-minut-economic-automobilele-fantoma-o-problema-reala-pe-drumurile-moldovei %F0%9F%9A%97%F0%9F%91%BB/

According to the data illustrated in Figure 4, ghost cars do not bring tax benefits, occupy space in cities unjustifiably, and can endanger traffic if used without technical inspections. This situation reflects the lack of clear strategies for managing end-of-life vehicles, which exacerbates both pollution and pressure on public space. At the same time, substantial imports of second-hand cars perpetuate the problem. In the absence of effective recycling policies, many old vehicles end up being abandoned, which deepens the economic and infrastructure crisis in the country.

The transport sector in Moldova plays a significant role in air pollution, being the main source of atmospheric pollutants at the national level. Figure 5 shows the main sources of air pollution in urban areas of the Republic of Moldova, highlighting the significant share of the transport sector. The illustration shows that road transport is responsible for approximately 86% of total air pollutant emissions, which places it at the top of the ranking of sources of pollution in cities. The remaining 14% is generated by industry, thermal power plants, individual households, and other urban activities. This distribution highlights the importance of implementing sustainable urban mobility policies aimed at reducing transport emissions in order to improve air quality and the health of the urban population.

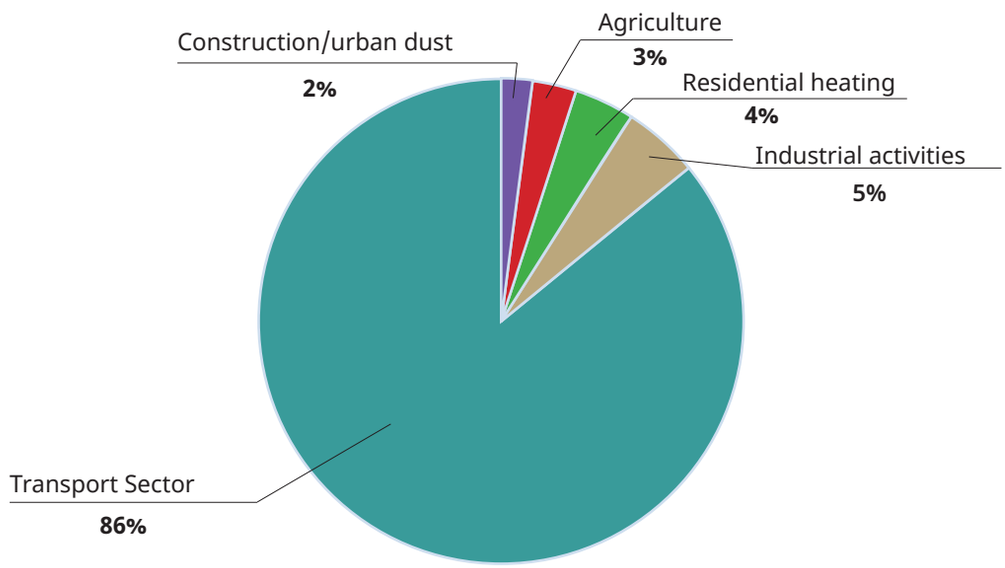


Fig. 5. Sources of air pollution in urban areas of Moldova[9]

In 2024, the number of hybrid vehicles in Moldova increased substantially, reaching approximately 51,500 units. Approximately 18,000 new hybrid vehicles were added to the national car fleet, an increase of over 50% compared to 2023.

Compared to global trends, Moldova exceeds the international average for electric and hybrid vehicles. While electric and hybrid vehicles account for approximately 4.5% of the global car fleet in 2024, their share in Moldova rises to 6.8%, exceeding not only the global average, but also that of the European Union and the United States.[10]

[9] OECD (2019). *Promoting Clean Urban Public Transportation and Green Investment in Moldova* (broșură). OECD Publishing. Available at: https://issuu.com/oecd.publishing/docs/moldova_transport_brochure_-_final

[10] Știri.md (2025, June 3). Over 57,000 electric and hybrid cars on the streets of Moldova. Available at: https://stiri.md/article/social/peste-57-000-de-masini-electrice-si-hibride-pe-strazile-din-r-moldova/

In Chișinău, vehicle fuel consumption has a significant impact on air quality and, implicitly, on public health. Even though not all 231,802 registered vehicles are used daily, realistic estimates show that between 60% and 70% of them are on the road on a typical day, which means daily consumption of between 183,000 and 292,000 liters of fuel – representing between 6% and 9% of total daily fuel consumption nationwide.

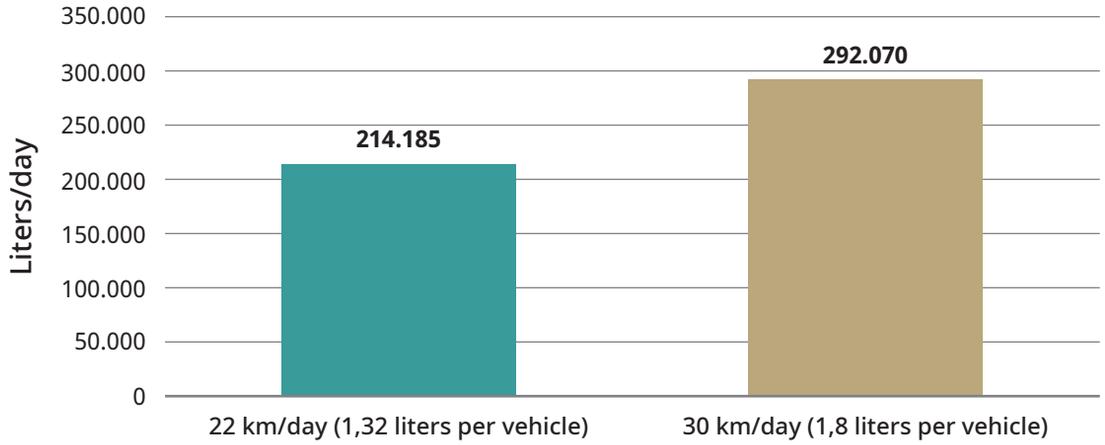


Fig. 6. Estimated daily fuel consumption in Chișinău (6L/100 km) [calculated by the authors]

This high amount of gasoline and diesel fuel burned in urban areas generates a significant volume of pollutant emissions, including fine particles and nitrogen oxides, which directly affect the health of residents, especially children, the elderly, and people with respiratory conditions.

1.3. GENDER, DISABILITY, AND TRANSPORTATION

Transport supports women's access to the economy, education, and essential services in Moldova. Women use public transport for 76.5% of their journeys, compared to 40.3% for men[11] and use taxis four times more often, highlighting their dependence on these services. However, limited access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation prevents them from fully participating in economic and social activities.

[11] UN Women & UNDP (2017). Time Use Survey – Transport (TUS ENG). Available at: https://moldova.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Moldova/Attachments/Publications/2017/08/TUS_Eng/03_Transport_ENG.pdf?utm_source=

Despite higher levels of education, with 76% of women enrolled in tertiary education compared to 53% of men, women face lower rates of labor force participation and employment.[12] This reflects an underutilization of their skills in the economy, exacerbated by the 15% wage gap between women and men in Moldova for 2024.[13] Improving transportation systems can reduce these gaps, enabling women to access better employment opportunities, training, and essential services, thereby promoting their economic inclusion and social mobility.

Women in Moldova face safety and time-related issues when using public transport. Globally, women are exposed to an increased risk of harassment and violence while traveling, and this is an issue that also applies to the Republic of Moldova. The development and implementation of gender-sensitive transport policies is an important step towards overcoming these difficulties, so that women can benefit from a safe, accessible travel environment that is adapted to their specific needs. Only through an inclusive approach that reflects social realities can women fully participate in economic and social life, thereby reducing inequalities and increasing the mobility of all members of society.

People with disabilities and transportation. A study conducted by the Auto Club of Moldova (CAM) and the Eastern Alliance for Safe and Sustainable Transport (AETSD), in collaboration with the United Nations Program in Moldova, highlighted major difficulties and significant obstacles faced by persons with disabilities in accessing adapted and safe transport services in the Republic of Moldova. According to the survey of a sample of 100 people, problems related to overcrowding in public transport, unsafe crossings, and the poor condition of roads were identified. Mobility issues are a significant concern, given that half of respondents reported that reduced mobility negatively affects how they are perceived by others, and nearly a third said it limits their life opportunities. One-third of respondents experienced difficulties getting to work, while half considered travelling to school dangerous. In addition, nearly 50% reported difficulties traveling to other cities, and 16% did not travel at all. Forty percent of respondents rated crossing the road as unsafe. These barriers not only increase travel time, but also heighten safety risks, further limiting the mobility and independence of people with disabilities.[14]

In the Republic of Moldova, persons with disabilities receive transportation allowances to facilitate their mobility and access to essential services. These measures contribute significantly to reducing barriers to travel, stimulating the social and economic participation of this group. At the same time, the support provided aims to eliminate the practical obstacles faced by persons with disabilities on a daily basis, thus promoting a more inclusive and accessible society for all its members. Compensation is paid quarterly and varies according to the degree of disability: 480 lei for persons with severe disabilities and children with disabilities, and 240 lei for persons with significant disabilities. In addition, people with locomotor disabilities (including children under 18) receive an extra 270 MDL every quarter.[15] This support reflects the country's commitment to respect the rights

[12] World Bank Blogs (2024, 6 March). *Investing Moldova's future: Increasing women's economic inclusion through the care economy*. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/investinpeople/investing-moldovas-future-increasing-womens-economic-inclusion-through-care-economy?utm_source=

[13] Economic Council (2024, September 19). *In Moldova, women earn up to 15% less than men*. Available at: https://consecon.gov.md/en/2024/09/19/in-moldova-women-earn-up-to-15-less-than-men/?utm_source=

[14] UNDP (2016, 21 April). People with disabilities face moderate to severe difficulties in terms of transportation in Moldova. Available at: https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/persons-disabilities-are-facing-moderate-severe-difficulties-transport-moldova?utm_source=

[15] Government Decision No. 1413/2016 of 27 December 2016 on the approval of the Regulation on the procedure for granting and paying transport service compensation. Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131714&lang=ro

of persons with disabilities under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, challenges remain in the effective implementation of compensation and the adaptation of transport infrastructure to meet the needs of this vulnerable group.

Conclusions to Chapter 1. Chapter 1 highlights the good progress made by the Republic of Moldova in switching to electric and hybrid vehicles, going beyond the global and European average, but also the big challenges caused by high fuel consumption in urban areas, which directly impacts air quality and people's health. Transport is seen to contribute significantly to access to the economy, education, and essential services, particularly for women and persons with disabilities, but obstacles related to safety, accessibility, and adapted infrastructure persist.

Gender inequalities in the use of public transport, participation in the labor market, and access to opportunities are amplified by the lack of safe and efficient transport services. At the same time, persons with disabilities face major mobility difficulties, despite compensatory measures, which limits their social and economic participation. These findings highlight the need for inclusive, gender-sensitive transport policies adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups in order to ensure sustainable, equitable development and a more cohesive society in the Republic of Moldova.




ECO

CHAPTER II

THE RESPONSE OF POLICIES AND BUDGETS TO THE GENDER DIMENSION

2.1. THE GREEN AGENDA, TRANSPORTATION, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Moldova's Green Agenda is closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on areas such as renewable energy (SDG 7), sustainable urban development (SDG 11), and climate action (SDG 13). To support these initiatives, the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have launched a €10 million project aimed at promoting Moldova's green transformation agenda.[16] In addition, the United States has pledged $135 million in aid to Moldova, with $85 million allocated to energy infrastructure and $50 million to modernize the energy and agricultural sectors, as well as to combat disinformation.[17]

The Republic of Moldova has set a target for renewable energy to account for at least 30% of total electricity consumption by 2030.[18] To achieve this goal, the authorities have adopted measures such as the National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan (PNIESC), which foresees the development of new renewable energy capacities and a 68.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels. The government has also approved the construction of 410 MW of new renewable capacity, with a focus on wind, solar, biomass, and small hydropower.[19]

[16] UNDP & European Union (2024, 10 May). *European Union and UNDP support the Republic of Moldova to advance its green transition agenda*. Available at: https://www.undp.org/moldova/press-releases/european-union-and-undp-support-republic-moldova-advance-its-green-transition-agenda

[17] Știri.md (2024, 29 May). The US offers Moldova new aid for the country's energy infrastructure. Available at: https://stiri.md/article/economic/sua-ofera-r-moldova-un-nou-ajutor-pentru-structura-energetica-a-tarii/

[18] Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova (February 16, 2025). *Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan – a roadmap for the economy and climate (PNIEC)*. Available at: https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/planul-national-integrat-pentru-energie-si-clima-o-foaie-de-parcurs-pentru-economie-si?utm_source=

[19] Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova (2025, January 24). *Renewable energy.* Available at: https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/energie-regenerabila?utm_source=

In 2024, Moldova launched its first tender for wind and solar power plants, offering financial incentives to private investors and guaranteeing a fixed price for the energy produced for 15 years.[20] Funding for these initiatives comes from the public budget, private investment and international support.

2.2. COUNTRY-LEVEL TRANSPORT POLICIES

In Moldova, transport policies are primarily guided by the Mobility Strategy 2030[21], overseen by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development (MIDR). This strategic plan highlights key development directions, such as improving the quality and safety of road infrastructure, promoting sustainable mobility, advancing digitalisation in transport, and improving regional integration by aligning with the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The main priorities are to develop a safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly transport network, with an emphasis on implementing policies that promote the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly means of transport to reduce pollutant emissions. The MIDR's collaboration with other ministries, in particular the Ministry of the Environment, ensures that transport development complies with international environmental standards.

At the local level, according to the Law on local public administration[22], local public authorities are responsible for managing and maintaining approximately 5,950 kilometers of local and regional roads, facilitating connectivity between rural and urban areas. These authorities supervise public transport routes and operations within municipalities. Their work is set against the challenge of regulating traffic involving nearly 1.13 million registered vehicles across the area, where the transport sector as a whole is responsible for over 86% of total pollutant emissions.[23]

[20] Reuters (2024, 16 August). *Moldova seeks investment for wind and solar plants with first tender.* Available at: https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/moldova-seeks-investment-wind-solar-plants-with-first-tender-2024-08-16/?utm_source=

[21] Government Decision No. 589/2024 of 28 August 2024 on the approval of the Mobility Strategy 2030. Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145139&lang=ro

[22] Law No. 436/2006 of 28 December 2006 on local public administration. Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150726&lang=ro#

[23] OECD (2023). Moldova – Transport Brochure (Final). OECD Publishing. Available at: https://issuu.com/oecd.publishing/docs/moldova_transport_brochure_-_final?utm_source=

Recently, initiatives to improve the safety and accessibility of public transport have begun to increasingly integrate a gender perspective. The Republic of Moldova's Mobility Strategy 2030 includes gender-sensitive planning measures aimed at increasing the safety of women and vulnerable groups in public transport, as well as facilitating access for people with disabilities.

At the same time, local authorities are encouraged to promote the digitization of public services by implementing electronic tickets and real-time transport monitoring systems, thus contributing to greater inclusion, including for people with varying levels of digital literacy. Through these responsibilities, local governance plays an important role in developing a fair transport system that is adapted to the diverse needs of community members, ensuring wider access and safer mobility for all.

Environmental policies. The environmental policies of the Republic of Moldova, reflected mainly in the Mobility Strategy 2030 and the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030"[24] place particular focus on sustainability and the promotion of gender equality in the field of transport. One of the central objectives of the Mobility Strategy 2030 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 52% compared to 1990 levels by 2030, which will be achieved by expanding the use of biofuels, increasing energy efficiency, and developing infrastructure for green transport. The strategy recognizes the diversity of mobility needs and integrates a gender-sensitive approach to ensure that public transport becomes safer, more accessible, and more adapted to women, children, older people, and people with disabilities. At the same time, the National Development Strategy supports the equitable representation of women in transport decision-making, with the aim of reducing structural disparities and promoting active and equal participation in the sector.

2.3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND TRANSPORT FINANCING

The institutional framework for transport policies in Moldova involves key actors at the national and local levels who are responsible for developing, implementing, and providing transport services. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development (MIDR) is responsible for defining and overseeing national transport policies, including the Mobility Strategy 2030 and sectoral strategies such as the Clean Public Transport Investment Program. MIDR collaborates with the Ministry of Environment to integrate environmental standards and regulations. In addition, municipalities

[24] National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030". Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=134582&lang=ro

such as Chișinău and Bălți play an important role in providing public transport services, particularly through entities such as Regia Transport Electric Chișinău (RTEC) for trolleybuses and Parcul Urban de Autobuze (PUA) for buses.

In small towns and rural areas, local public authorities play an important role in providing transport services, often in collaboration with private operators. Unlike large cities in Moldova, public transport in rural areas is dominated by private minibuses and occasional bus routes. These services are often irregular, poorly maintained, and inaccessible to people with disabilities, creating significant mobility difficulties for vulnerable groups.[25]

Limited resources and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these challenges in rural areas. Many roads are in poor condition, and the lack of subsidies or incentives for private operators often leads to higher costs for passengers. In addition, the lack of integrated transport systems and reliable schedules reduces accessibility, especially for those traveling to urban centers for education, healthcare, or work.

To address these disparities, MIDR's Mobility Strategy 2030 includes measures to improve rural connectivity, modernize public transport fleets, and ensure better integration between urban and rural transport networks. However, effective implementation of transport policies requires strengthened collaboration between national and local authorities, increased investment in infrastructure, and policies that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, including people with disabilities and those living in remote areas.

Transport financing. In Moldova, the transport sector is financed from both the national and local budgets, with a strong focus on sustainability and inclusion. The 2024 national budget allocates approximately 4.04 billion lei for transport and infrastructure, with 1.39 billion lei coming from external funds and 2.51 billion lei specifically dedicated to road maintenance in national and local networks. Local authorities, particularly in Chișinău, also have a major role in funding transport improvements. For example, the Chișinău Urban Mobility Plan 2030 (PMUD)[26] allocates resources for improving urban mobility, including investments in public transport infrastructure, pedestrian areas, and bike lanes, all aimed at reducing congestion and improving air quality.

Despite these substantial allocations, the state budget law lacks gender-disaggregated indicators or performance indicators that address the needs of women or persons with disabilities.

Public transport, including services adapted for persons with disabilities, is mainly financed from local budgets. These funds cover the maintenance of transport infrastructure and the provision of public transport equipped with ramps and other accessibility features. However, implementation remains uneven across regions, with rural and less urbanized areas often facing greater challenges in ensuring accessibility and inclusion.

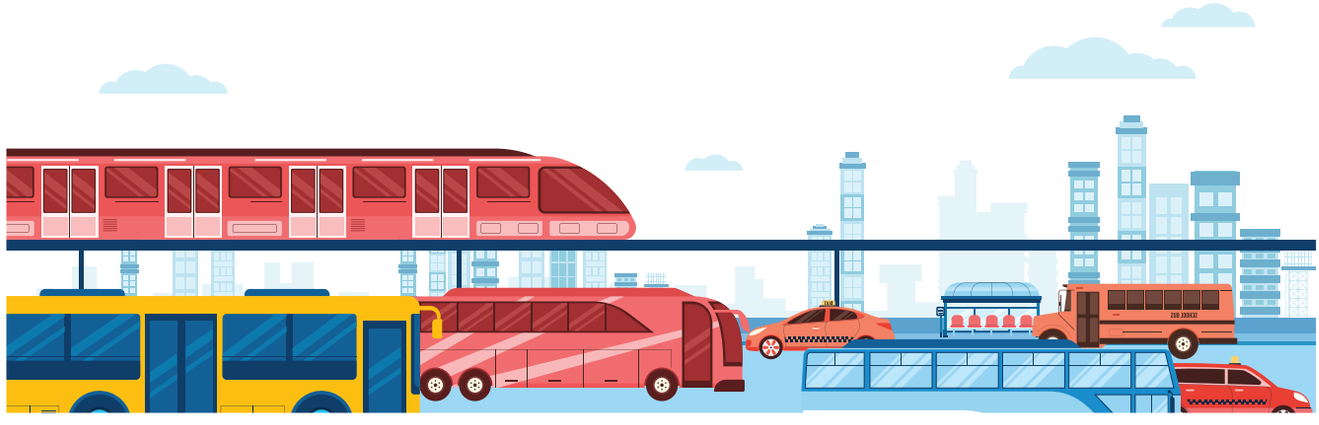
The absence of gender- and disability-disaggregated data and performance indicators in the budget highlights a gap in addressing the specific mobility needs of women and persons with disabilities. This limits the ability to assess the impact of transport investments on vulnerable groups and to ensure equitable access to transport services.

[25] Disability mobility & roadrisk in Moldova. Available at: https://saferoads.md/information/DMR-in-Moldova.pdf
[26] Chișinău Urban Mobility Plan 2030. Available at: https://mill.md/pmud/

Conclusions to Chapter 2. Chapter 2 highlights the progress made by the Republic of Moldova in developing a policy and institutional framework oriented towards sustainability and inclusion in the transport sector. National policies, such as the Mobility Strategy 2030 and the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030," reflect an approach geared toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting gender equality, and supporting vulnerable groups. However, there are significant differences between urban and rural areas, both in terms of access to quality public transport services and in terms of available infrastructure and resources.

Funding for the sector comes from both national and local budgets, with significant allocations for infrastructure modernization and the expansion of green transport. However, the lack of disaggregated indicators by gender and disability in the budget process, and the absence of clear performance metrics, limits the ability to evaluate the impact of policies on women and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the uneven implementation of accessibility measures accentuates regional and social disparities, a challenge that requires additional interventions adapted to the specificities of each community.

Although the strategic framework and funding efforts demonstrate political will for the development of sustainable and inclusive public transport, significant challenges remain in addressing the needs of all citizens, especially those in rural areas, women, and persons with disabilities. Closer collaboration between authorities, increased investment, and data-driven monitoring are needed to ensure that transport policies bring equitable benefits to all segments of the population. As the saying goes, "Where there is unity, there is strength." Only through joint and targeted efforts can current barriers be overcome, and a truly accessible and modern transport system be built.





CHAPTER III

TRANSPORT BEHAVIORS: PATTERNS AND GENDER DIMENSIONS

In July 2024, Keystone Moldova, in partnership with CSOs from six other countries that are members of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN), conducted a large-scale online survey to assess users' experiences and perceptions of transport accessibility, safety, and climate impact. The survey was conducted by MNForce, a company specializing in sociological and market research services. Data was collected through a CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) survey, managed by local PANEL companies. The 30-minute questionnaire was administered in seven countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Moldova).

Demographic data about respondents. The following section presents the results of the research in Moldova. A total of 1,100 respondents participated in the research, including 582 women, 512 men, one person who identified as "other," and five people who preferred not to disclose their gender. The age distribution of survey participants is as follows: 21% were aged 18-24, 31% were aged 25-34, 30% were aged 35-44, 12% were aged 45-54, and 6% were aged 55 or older. Respondents included people with disabilities from rural and urban areas. The distribution of research participants by ethnicity is as follows: Moldovans – 65.4%, Romanians – 14.5%, Russians – 10.6%, Ukrainians – 4.3%, Gagauz – 2.1%, and Bulgarians – 1.8% (Fig. 7).

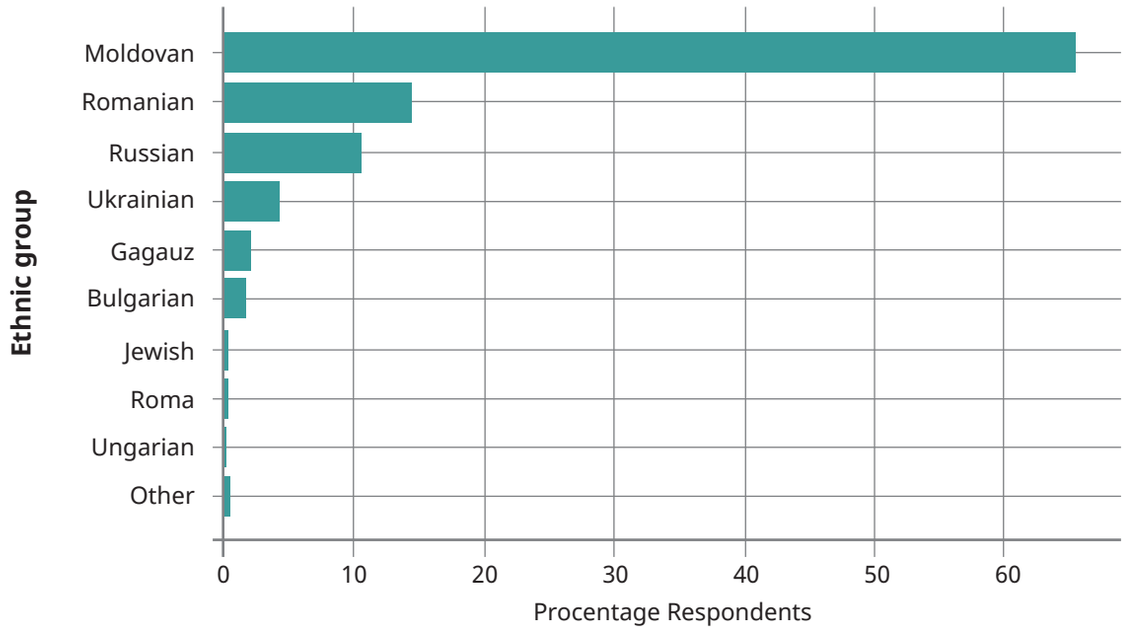


Fig. 7. Ethnic distribution of respondents, %

3.1. ACCESSIBILITY OF SIDEWALKS AND TRANSPORTATION

Sidewalk accessibility. The research data shows that approximately 28.6% of respondents consider sidewalks to be completely inaccessible for people with disabilities and users of strollers (for children, shopping, etc.), 11.7% consider them to be very accessible, and 51.2% consider them to be somewhat or partially accessible.

The data in Figure 8 highlights the differences between women's and men's opinions on the accessibility of sidewalks. Thus, the proportion of women who consider sidewalks completely inaccessible is almost 14 percentage points higher than that of men. In contrast, the proportion of men who consider sidewalks very accessible is almost twice as high as that of women (for comparison: 8.9% of women consider them very accessible compared to 15.0% of men). These differences can be attributed to distinct social roles. For example, women use sidewalks more frequently for activities such as accompanying young children or going shopping, which exposes them more often to accessibility barriers.

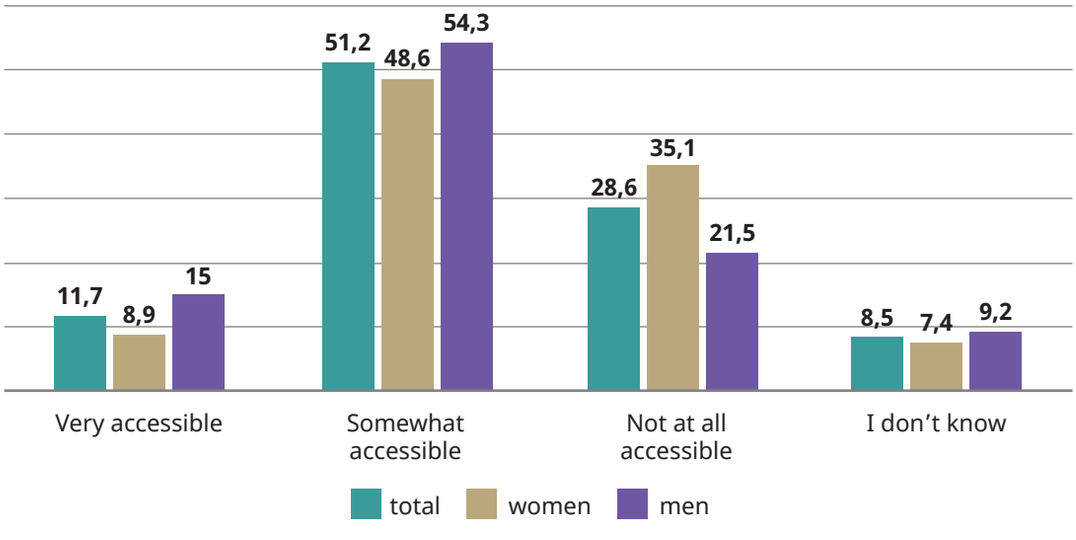


Fig. 8. Respondents' perceptions of sidewalk accessibility, overall and by gender, %

In terms of place of residence, people in rural areas express greater dissatisfaction with sidewalk accessibility compared to those in urban areas. Thus, 32.7% of respondents in rural areas compared to 26.6% of respondents in urban areas consider sidewalks to be completely inaccessible for people with wheelchairs or people with mobility disabilities. 40.4% of respondents in rural areas and 56.5% of respondents in urban areas consider them to be somewhat accessible. And only 15.1% of respondents in rural areas and 10.1% in urban areas consider sidewalks to be very accessible.

Sidewalk accessibility is especially important for women, older adults, and people with disabilities, who rely on walking or public transportation to carry out their daily activities. Inadequate or poor infrastructure significantly restricts their freedom of movement and participation in community life, affecting them disproportionately compared to other groups. Without accessible sidewalks, these individuals face additional barriers, which can lead to social isolation and a reduced quality of life.

The accessibility of transportation was analyzed from two perspectives: physical access and the availability of financial resources to pay for transportation.

Physical accessibility of transportation. The data presented in Figure 9 highlights how respondents perceive the accessibility of buses for people with disabilities, older people, and people with small children in strollers. Overall, more than half of respondents consider buses to be very accessible for people with disabilities, older people, and people with small children in strollers. 37.8% consider them to be somewhat accessible, and 7.8% consider them to be not accessible at all.

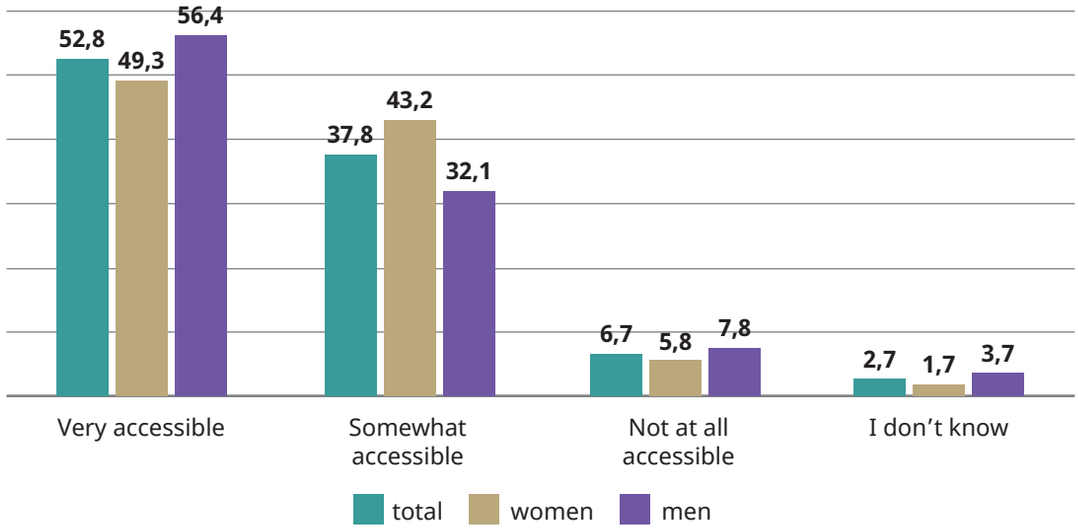


Fig. 9. Respondents' perceptions of bus accessibility for people with disabilities, older people, and people with small children in strollers, overall and by gender, %

There are no significant differences between the perceptions of respondents in rural areas and those in urban areas. Thus, 52.5% in rural areas and 53.0% in urban areas consider buses to be very accessible. 37.45% in rural areas and 37.9% in urban areas believe that buses are accessible to a certain extent, and 2.5% in rural areas and 2.9% in urban areas consider them to be completely inaccessible.

By gender, the proportion of men who consider buses to be very accessible (56.4%) is 7.1 percentage points higher than that of women (49.3%). On the other hand, the proportion of women who consider buses to be partially accessible (43.2%) is 11.1 percentage points higher than that of men (32.2%). These data show clear differences between women and men regarding the degree of accessibility of buses for people with disabilities, elderly people, and people with small children in strollers. Women express a higher degree of dissatisfaction with the accessibility of transport compared to men, which indicates that they face more frequent barriers to using it, especially when carrying out everyday activities such as accompanying children or shopping. People with disabilities face additional difficulties due to the lack of access ramps or low-floor buses, which significantly limits their mobility. The situation is even more difficult for women with disabilities, who face not only physical obstacles but also challenges related to personal safety and negative attitudes from other members of the community.

Approximately two-thirds of respondents consider taxis to be somewhat/partially accessible or completely inaccessible to people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with small children in strollers, and only one-third consider them to be very accessible (Fig. 10). There are no significant differences in perceptions based on place of residence. Thus, 29.9% in rural areas and 26.0% in urban areas consider taxis to be very accessible. 44.0% in rural areas and 46.7% in urban areas believe that taxis are somewhat accessible, and 19.2% in rural areas and 20.1% in urban areas consider them to be completely inaccessible.

Women's perceptions of taxi accessibility differ significantly from those of men. Thus, men (29.5%) are more likely than women (25.3%) to consider taxis very accessible. In contrast, women are more likely than men to consider them completely inaccessible (for comparison: 23.2% of women and 16% of men) (Fig. 10). These results reflect the fact that, despite the progress made in recent years, the accessibility of taxi services remains insufficiently adapted to the needs of vulnerable people. Among the main obstacles mentioned are the lack of specially equipped vehicles, the additional costs charged for transporting wheelchairs or people with disabilities, and the discriminatory attitudes occasionally displayed by drivers. It is clear that without concrete measures to improve infrastructure and services, equal access to transport for all citizens cannot be guaranteed.

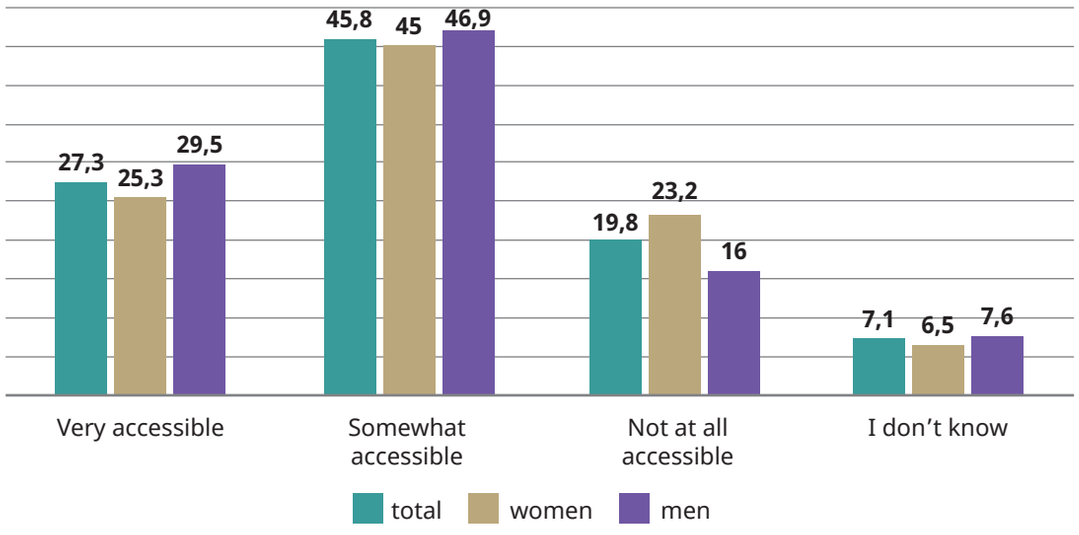


Fig. 10. Respondents' perceptions of the physical accessibility of taxis for persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and persons with small children in strollers, overall and by gender, %.

Affordability of transport. The affordability of transport is a fundamental pillar in ensuring the mobility of the population. The analysis of the affordability of bus travel shows that approximately two-thirds of respondents consider this means of transport to be very affordable. At the same time, one in four respondents consider it affordable, but with prices that are still considered high, and about one in ten respondents consider bus travel to be financially inaccessible (Fig. 11).

By gender, the share of women who consider bus travel affordable but still expensive (28.4%) is 6.1 percentage points higher than that of men (22.3%). This difference highlights the fact that women feel the financial burden of public transport more acutely, even if they consider it somewhat physically accessible.

When analyzing residential areas, it can be observed that a significantly higher percentage of respondents in urban areas (64.9%) consider bus travel to be very affordable, compared to those in rural areas (51.4%). At the same time, the proportion of people in rural areas who consider bus travel to be unaffordable (13.5%) is almost double that recorded in urban areas (6.8%).

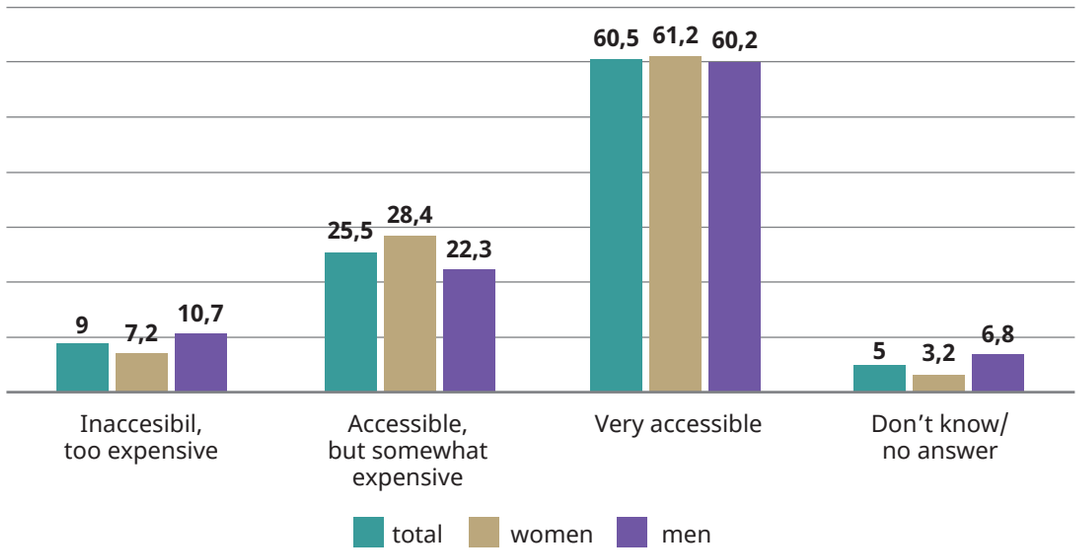


Fig. 11. Respondents' perceptions of the affordability of buses, overall and by gender, %

An analysis of the affordability of car use shows that one in five respondents consider this means of transport unaffordable due to high costs. A percentage of 41.2% believe that, although traveling by car is affordable, it is still expensive, and 28.8% of respondents consider cars to be very affordable (Fig. 12).

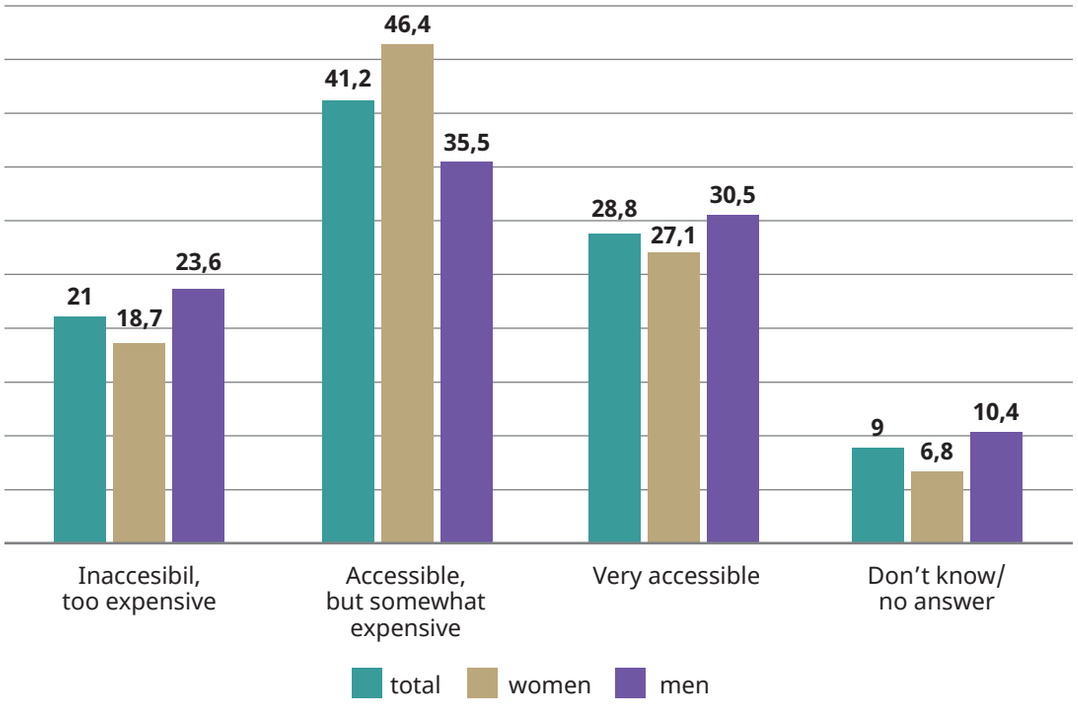


Fig. 12. Respondents' perceptions of the affordability of cars, overall and by gender, %

Analyzing the data by gender reveals some noticeable differences. Thus, the proportion of women who consider this means of transport to be very affordable is 27.1%, which is 3.4 percentage points lower than that of men (30.5%). At the same time, a significantly higher percentage of women (46.4%) consider this type of transport to be affordable, but still expensive, 10.9 percentage points above the level recorded among men (35.5%).

The analysis of the affordability of taxis shows that about one-third of respondents consider this service unaffordable due to high costs, while half of them perceive it as affordable but still expensive. Only 13.1% of respondents consider taxis to be very affordable (Fig. 13).

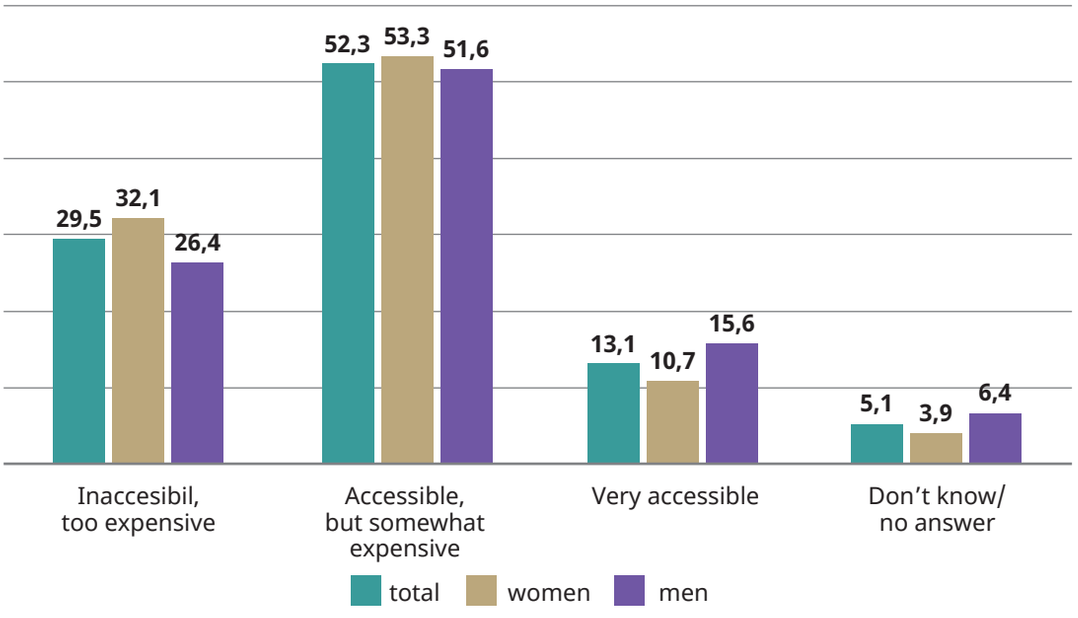


Fig. 13. Respondents' perceptions of the affordability of taxis, overall and by gender, %

When analyzing the data by gender, significant differences emerge: the percentage of women who consider taxis unaffordable due to high costs is 32.1%, exceeding the percentage of men (26.4%) by 5.7 percentage points. At the same time, only 10.7% of women consider taxis to be very affordable, compared to 15.6% of men, a difference of 5.1 percentage points.

An analysis of respondents' access to household financial resources to cover transportation expenses shows that 58.8% of participants are able to use the family budget for these expenses, 18.4% have their own financial resources, and 13.4% have no access to such funds (Fig. 14).

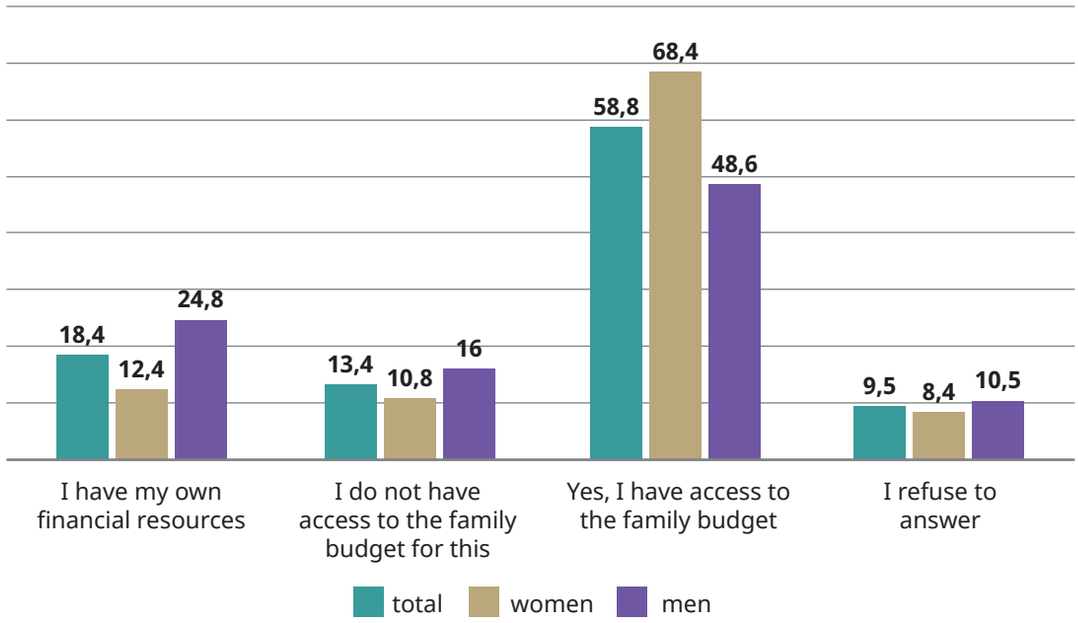


Fig. 14. Respondents' access to household financial resources to cover transportation expenses, overall and by gender, %

From a gender perspective, it can be observed that the proportion of those who have their own financial resources for transportation expenses is significantly higher among men (24.8%) than among women (18.4%). On the other hand, access to the family budget to cover transportation costs is more common among women (68.4%) than among men (48.6%). At the same time, the percentage of people who do not have access to financial resources from the family budget for transport is higher among women (16%), exceeding by 5.2 percentage points the situation among men (10.8%).

Therefore, the analysis of the data presented highlights the existence of significant disparities between women and men in terms of both physical and financial accessibility to means of transport in the Republic of Moldova. These differences are manifested in perceptions, daily experiences, and mobility opportunities, and are influenced by social roles, economic status, and family responsibilities.

With regard to physical accessibility, women are much more strongly affected by infrastructure limitations, such as sidewalks and public transport, which is reflected in a higher proportion of those who consider these services to be totally or partially inaccessible. This perception is influenced by the fact that women use sidewalks more frequently for activities such as accompanying children or going shopping, thus being exposed to physical barriers more often. In the case of buses and taxis, women report a higher degree of dissatisfaction with accessibility, facing a lack of ramps, logistical difficulties, or discriminatory attitudes. These obstacles are even more pronounced for women with disabilities, who face additional challenges in terms of safety and mobility.

In terms of affordability, women perceive the costs of public and private transport as more burdensome than men. A higher proportion of women consider bus or taxi travel to be affordable only with additional financial effort or even unaffordable. In addition, women's access to their own financial resources is significantly lower than that of men, as they are more dependent on the family budget to cover transportation expenses. These constraints further undermines women's mobility and independence, especially in rural areas where disparities are even more pronounced.

The disparities identified are not only related to infrastructure or costs, but also reflect traditional social roles and the unequal distribution of family responsibilities and resources. Women are more exposed to social isolation and difficulties in accessing basic services, in the absence of measures adapted to their specific needs.

In conclusion, reducing these disparities requires an integrated approach that focuses both on improving transport infrastructure and adapting services to the diverse needs of users, as well as providing financial support to vulnerable groups, especially women.

3.2. USE OF MEANS OF TRANSPORT

Ownership of transportation. According to the survey, 46.8% of respondents own a car, 31.5% own a bicycle, 2.8% own an e-bike, 5.2% own an e-scooter, and 32.8% do not own any of the above mentioned types of transport (Fig. 15).

Analyzing the areas of residence, we observe that the proportion of people who own cars is higher in urban areas (49.7%) than in rural areas (40.9%). In terms of bicycle ownership, the figures are almost identical between rural (31.6%) and urban (31.5%) areas, a sign that this means of transport is similarly accessible in both environments. Slightly more respondents in urban areas (5.4%) say they own e-scooters than in rural areas (4.7%). It is worth noting that the proportion of those who do not own any type of transport is significantly higher in rural areas (35.4%) than in urban areas (31.5%), which highlights the inequalities in access to mobility between the two environments.

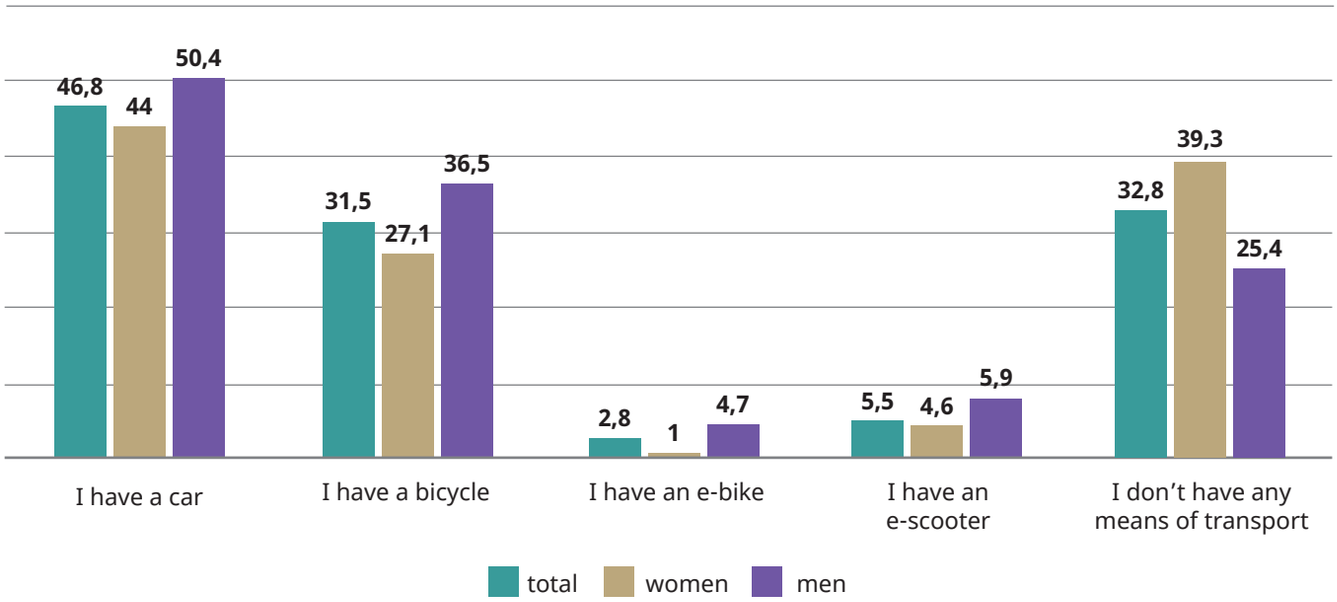


Fig. 15. Proportion of respondents who have certain means of transport, overall, by gender, %

Analyzing the data by gender, it can be seen that men own cars in significantly higher proportions (50.4%) than women (44%), with a difference of 5.6 percentage points. As for bicycles, 36.5% of men own this means of transport, compared to only 27.1% of women, which represents a difference of 9.4%. Similarly, the proportion of men who own e-bikes (4.7%) is four times higher than that of women (1%). There is also a difference in the ownership of e-scooters, with 5.9% of men owning one, compared to 4.6% of women. On the other hand, women are much more numerous in the category of those who do not have any type of personal transportation – 39.3% of women compared to 25.4% of men, a significant difference of 13.9 percentage points. These discrepancies highlight inequalities in access to mobility and underscore women's increased vulnerability in terms of independence in travel.

Use of different means of transport. When asked about access to various means of transport when they want to travel, 58.9% of respondents said they can use the bus, 57.4% have access to a car, 28.1% to a bicycle, 9.6% to an e-scooter, 6% to an e-bike, and 5.7% said they cannot access any means of transport.

Analyzing the areas of residence, it can be seen that respondents in urban areas have better access to buses (63.9% compared to 48.9% in rural areas), cars (59.4% compared to 53.3%), and e-scooters (11% compared to 6.9%). On the other hand, rural residents have slightly higher access to bicycles (29.4% compared to 27.4% in urban areas) and e-bikes (7.1% compared to 5.4% in urban areas). At the same time, the proportion of those who do not have any means of transport is higher in rural

areas (7.1%) than in urban areas (5%), which highlights the gaps in access to mobility between the two environments.

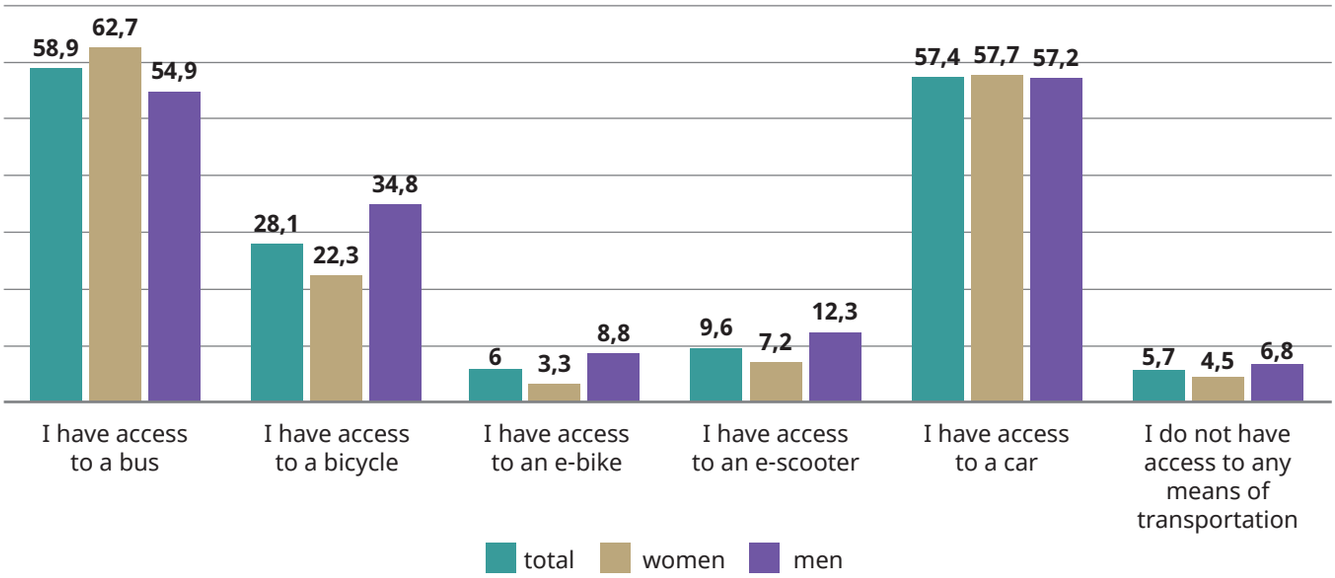


Fig. 16. Use of transportation when necessary, overall, by gender, %

An analysis of gender differences shows that women use buses more often as a means of transport when they need to travel, with a percentage of 62.7%, compared to 54.9% among men. The proportion of women who use cars when they want to is practically the same as that of men (57.7% women and 57.2% men). At the same time, the proportion of women who use bicycles when they want to is lower than that of men (22.3% versus 34.8%). The same is also characteristic for e-bikes (3.3% women versus 8.8% men) and e-scooters (7.2% women versus 12.3% men). These discrepancies highlight the differences between men and women in accessing means of transport for their travel needs.

Distances traveled by women and men in one direction daily. When asked how many kilometers they travel daily in one direction, to school or work, 33.4% of respondents said 1-5 km, 22.8% said 6-10 km, 11.5% 11-15 km, 7% 16-20 km, 7.7% over 21 km, and 10.9% indicated that they do not travel. (Fig. 17).

Analyzing the distribution by gender, we observe that men are more likely to travel short distances of up to 10 km in one direction on a daily basis, accounting for 59.2% of the total, compared to 53.8% among women. This difference can be explained by the fact that men generally have easier access to personal means of transport, such as cars or bicycles, which allows them to manage their daily travel more efficiently, especially over short distances. On the other hand, when it comes to longer distances, over 11 km in one direction, the proportions are equal, with 25.9% of men and 26% of women traveling this way. This balance suggests that, regardless of gender, long-distance mobility needs are similar, probably determined by factors such as work or school, where the available transport options are more uniform and access barriers are not as pronounced.

At the same time, the equal share of those who travel more than 11 km daily may reflect the adaptation of both groups to the existing infrastructure, such as the use of public transport or other collective solutions, where distances become an additional challenge.

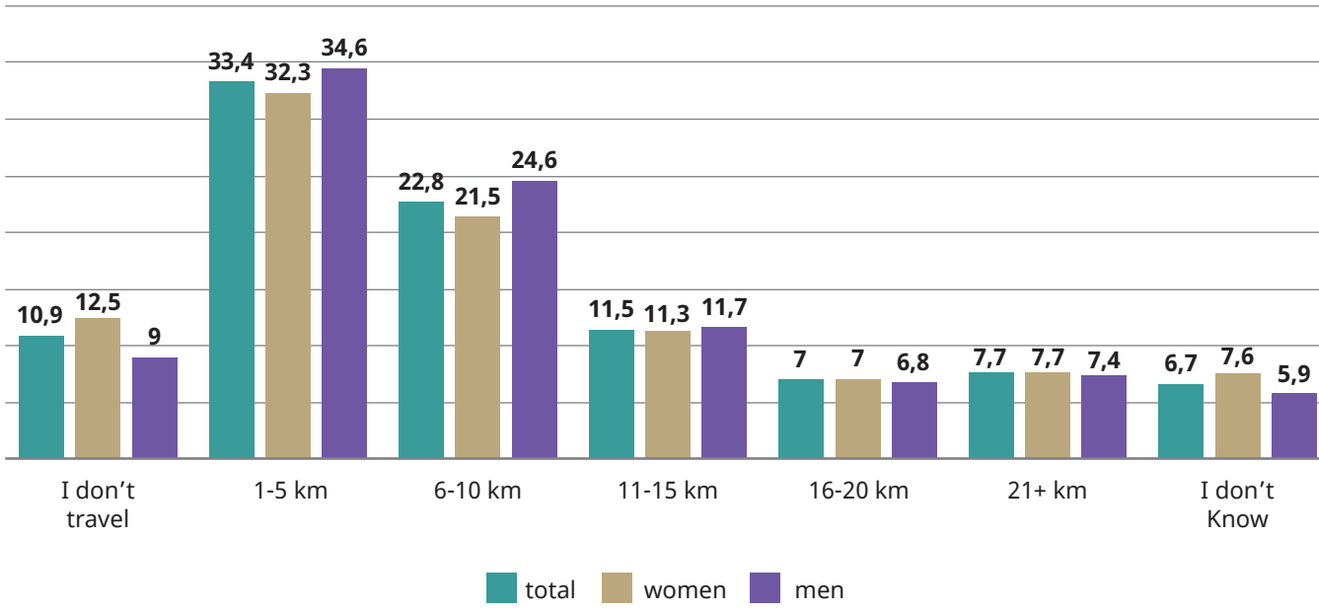


Fig. 17. Daily distance traveled in one direction, in km, total, by gender

Average time spent daily on travel. The survey revealed that approximately 37.7% of respondents travel less than 30 minutes daily, 40.9% travel 31-60 minutes, 13.3% travel between 1 and 2 hours, and 8.1% travel more than 2 hours (Fig. 18). The analysis of the time spent daily on travel by gender did not reveal any significant discrepancies.

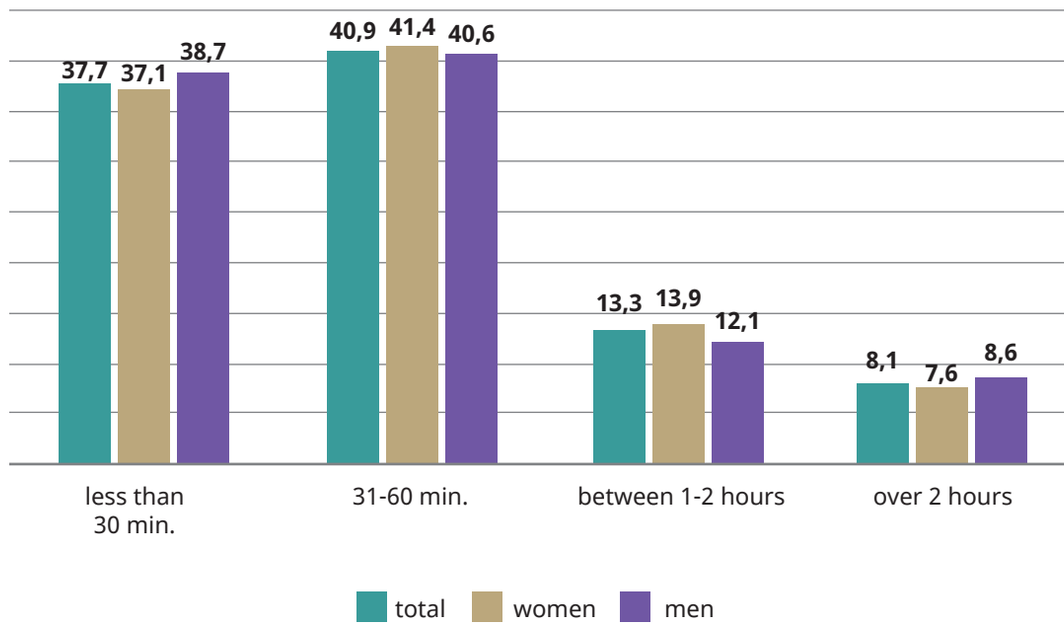


Fig. 18. Average time spent daily on travel, total, by gender, %

However, among people who travel more, women are slightly more numerous, which may indicate certain subtle differences in how they experience everyday mobility.

Frequency of use of means of transport.

Bus use. According to the data, 28.3% of respondents said they use the bus daily, 27% several times a week, 19% several times a month, 20.9% rarely, and 4.8% never (Fig. 19). The disparities between urban and rural areas are evident: people in urban areas use the bus more frequently than those in rural areas. Thus, 29.6% of urban residents use the bus every day, compared to 25.5% in rural areas. At the same time, 27.6% of urban respondents use it several times a week, compared to 25.8% in rural areas. On the other hand, the proportion of rural residents who use the bus several times a month (21.7%) or less frequently (22.3%) is higher than in urban areas (17.7% and 20.2%, respectively). These data show that rural residents use buses less often, reflecting differences in access to and frequency of public transport services between the two environments.

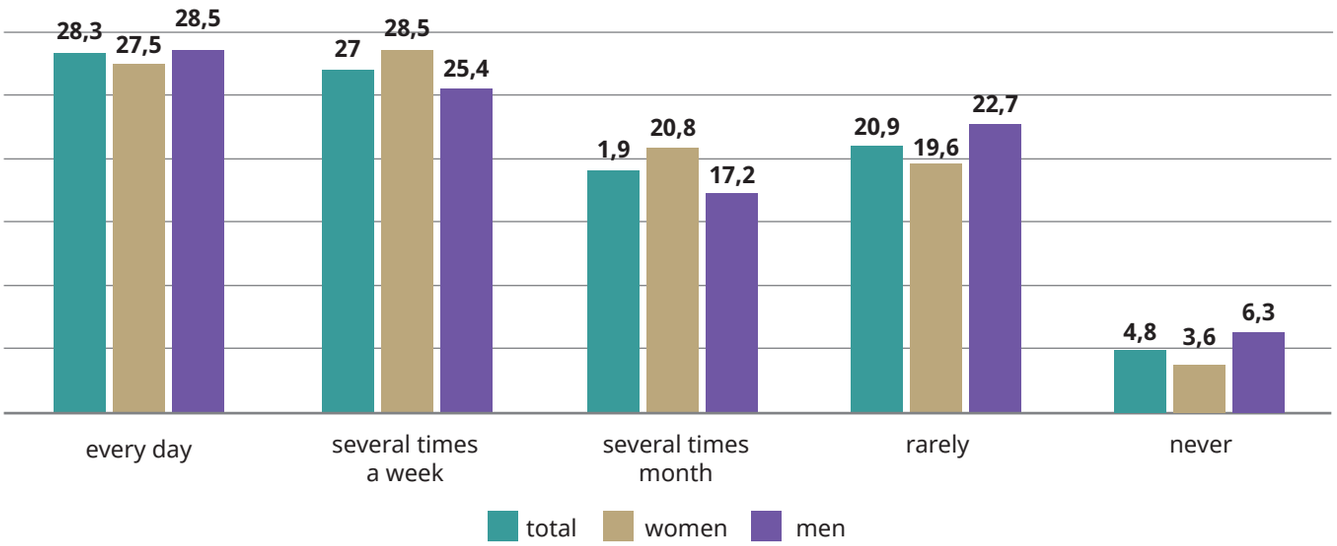


Fig. 19. Frequency of bus use by respondents, overall and by gender, %

By gender, %

Analyzing bus use by gender, we see that the percentage of women who use it daily is almost equal to that of men (27.5% versus 28.5%). However, women tend to use the bus more frequently during the week or month: 28.5% of women use it several times a week compared to 25.4% of men, and 20.8% of women use it monthly, compared to 17.2% of men. On the other hand, men are more likely to use the bus rarely (22.7%), compared to women, where this share is 19.6%. These data highlight subtle differences in mobility habits between women and men, suggesting that women are more willing to integrate public transport into their regular routine, while men rely on it less frequently, possibly due to higher access to private vehicles or alternative modes of transport. The "never" category further supports this pattern – 6.3% of men reported never using the bus compared to only 3.6% of women. Overall, these findings indicate that public transport, particularly buses, plays a more central role in women's daily mobility patterns, reflecting both their travel needs and potentially lower access to private means of transportation.

Walking. 68.6% of respondents walk daily, 15.2% several times a week, 8.3% several times a month, 5.7% rarely, and 2.2% never (Fig. 20).

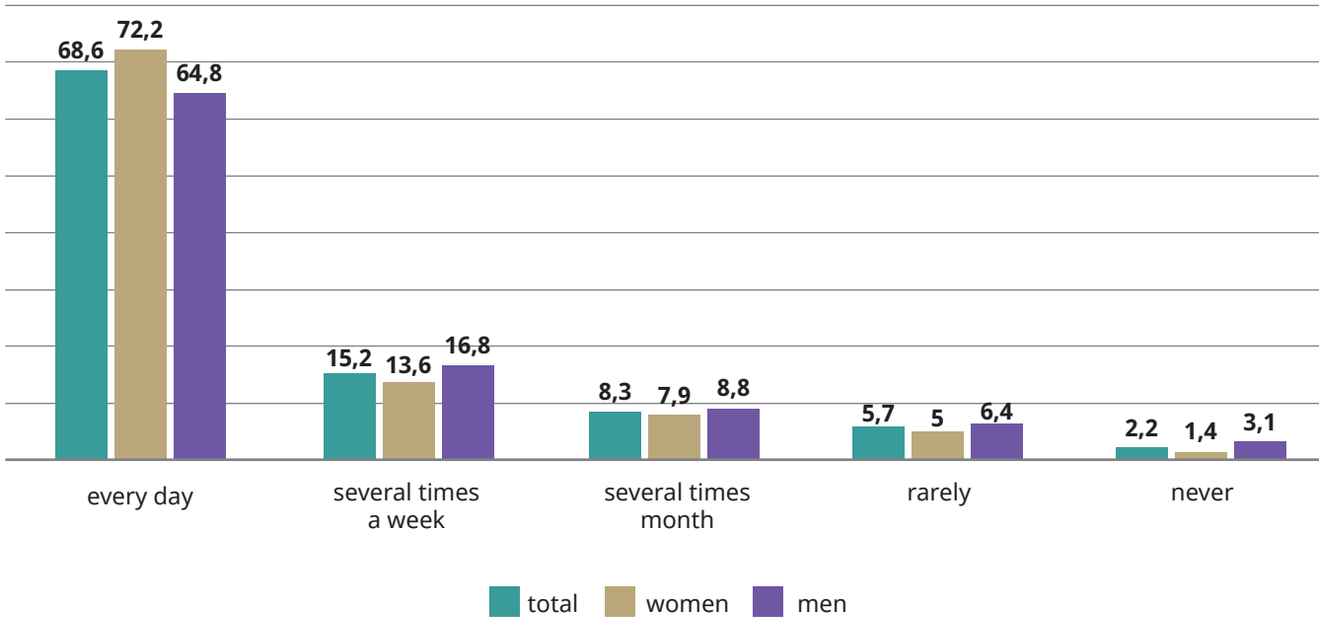


Fig. 20. Frequency of walking among respondents, overall and by gender, %

An analysis of residence area reveals that a higher proportion of respondents in urban areas (69.4%) walk daily, compared to those in rural areas (67%). At the same time, rural residents are more likely to walk only weekly (16.8%) or monthly (10.4%), these percentages being higher than those recorded in urban areas (14.4% and 7.2%, respectively). It is also noteworthy that walking very rarely is more common in urban areas (6.9%) than in rural areas (3.3%), suggesting a difference in daily mobility habits between the two environments.

Analyzing the distribution by gender, we can notice that walking is practiced daily by a significantly higher proportion of women (72.2%) compared to men (64.8%), with a difference of 7.4 percentage points. On the other hand, men are more likely to walk less frequently: 16.8% of them choose to do so weekly, compared to 13.6% of women, and 8.8% prefer to walk monthly, compared to 7.9% of women. Walking is also less common among men (6.4%) than women (5.0%), reflecting a subtle difference in mobility habits between the two genders.

Bicycle use. The survey shows that respondents rarely use bicycles as a means of transport. Only 8% of participants say they use bicycles daily, 11.7% several times a week, 19.5% several times a month, 15.6% only occasionally, and no less than 45.2% never use them. These data show that cycling is not yet integrated into the daily routine of the majority, which may reflect both reduced accessibility and perceptions of convenience or safety.

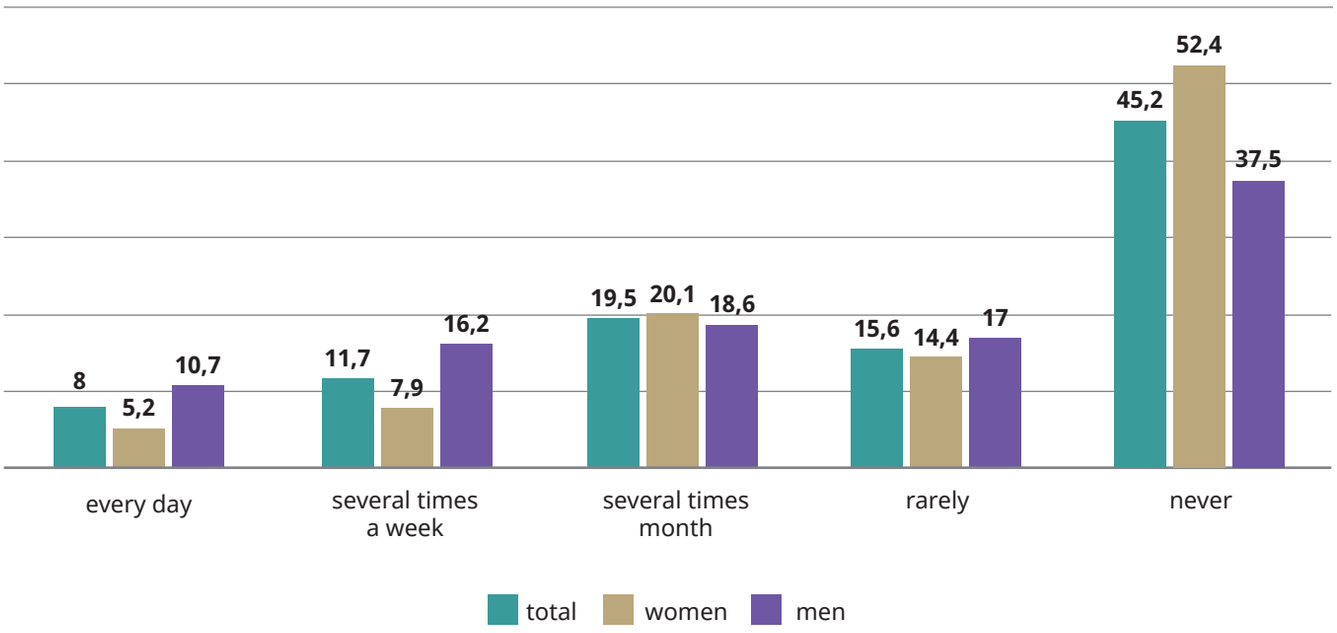


Fig. 21. Frequency of bicycle use by respondents, overall and by gender, %

Analyzing the place of residence, we observe that the percentage of respondents in rural areas who use bicycles daily (11.3%) or several times a week (14.3%) exceeds that of respondents in urban areas (6.4% and 10.5%, respectively). In contrast, in urban areas, the proportion of those who use bicycles only monthly (19.8%) or rarely (16.7%) is higher than in rural areas (18.7% and 13.5%, respectively). Also, the percentage of urban respondents who have never used a bicycle (46.6%) is higher than that of rural respondents (42.3%). These differences reflect distinct mobility habits and the fact that bicycles are more accessible as a means of transport in rural areas.

In terms of gender differences, men use bicycles daily (10.7%) and weekly (16.2%) at a significantly higher rate than women (5.2% and 7.9 respectively). On the other hand, women cycle more frequently on a monthly basis (20.1%) than men (18.6%). It is also noteworthy that more than half of women (52.4%) never use bicycles, a percentage that exceeds by 14.9 percentage points the proportion of men who do not use this means of transport (37.5%).

Car usage. 29% of respondents said they use their car daily, 25.9% weekly, 17.8% monthly, 16.2% rarely, and 11.1% never.

Analyzing the differences between rural and urban areas in terms of car use, we observe that the percentage of those who use their car daily is slightly higher in rural areas (30.3%) compared to urban areas (28.4%). On the other hand, urban residents prefer to use cars weekly to a greater extent (26.9%) than rural residents (23.9%). Also, monthly or occasional car use is more common among rural people (20.8% monthly and 17.8% rarely), unlike in urban areas, where these percentages are 16.3% and 15.6%, respectively. Another noteworthy aspect is that in urban areas, the proportion of those who never use a car (12.8%) is significantly higher than in rural areas (7.7%). These differences suggest that access to cars and the frequency of their use are influenced by the specific characteristics of the place of residence, reflecting the distinct priorities and needs of urban and rural residents.

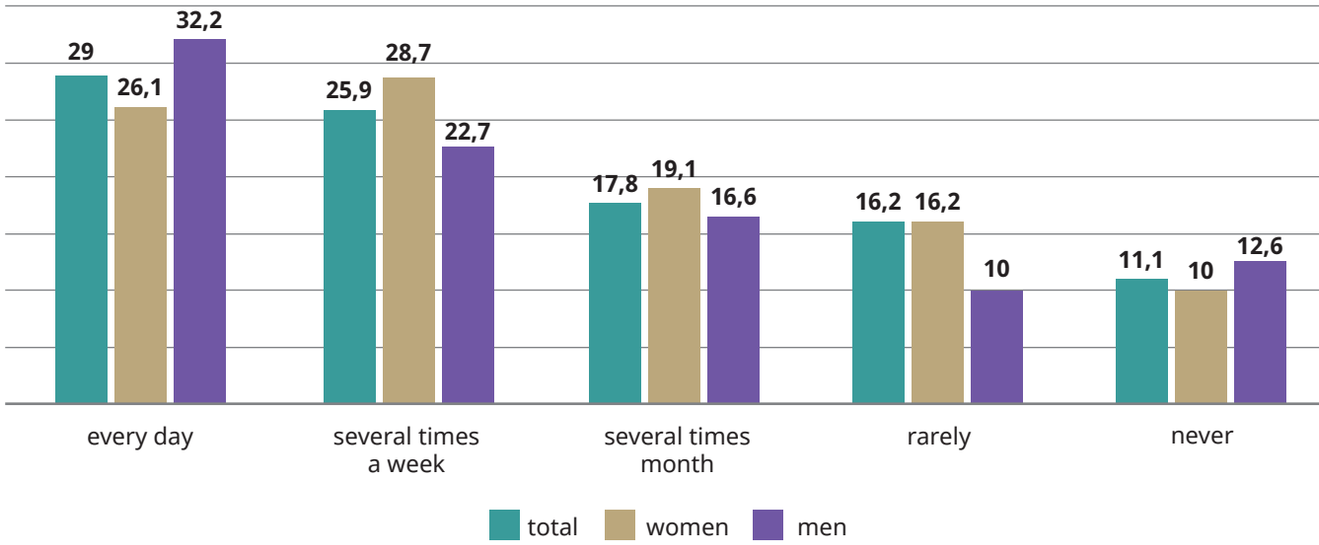


Fig. 22. Frequency of car use by respondents, overall and by gender, %

An analysis of gender differences in car use reveals that men are more likely to use their cars daily (32.2%) than women (26.6%). On the other hand, women tend to use cars more frequently during the week (28.7%) and month (19.1%) than men (22.7% and 16.6%, respectively). Also, a higher percentage of women use their cars only occasionally (16.2%) compared to men (10%). In terms of not using a car, the proportion of men who never use one (12.6%) is slightly higher than that of women (10%). These data highlight subtle differences in mobility habits between genders, reflecting both different priorities and possible influences related to family responsibilities or access to personal means of transport.

Use of taxis. Compared to buses and cars, taxis are predominantly used on an occasional basis. According to the survey results, half of the respondents say they rarely use taxis, while 23.7% use this means of transport several times a month, 11% several times a week, and only 5.9% choose to travel by taxi daily. It is noteworthy that one in ten respondents said they never use taxis.

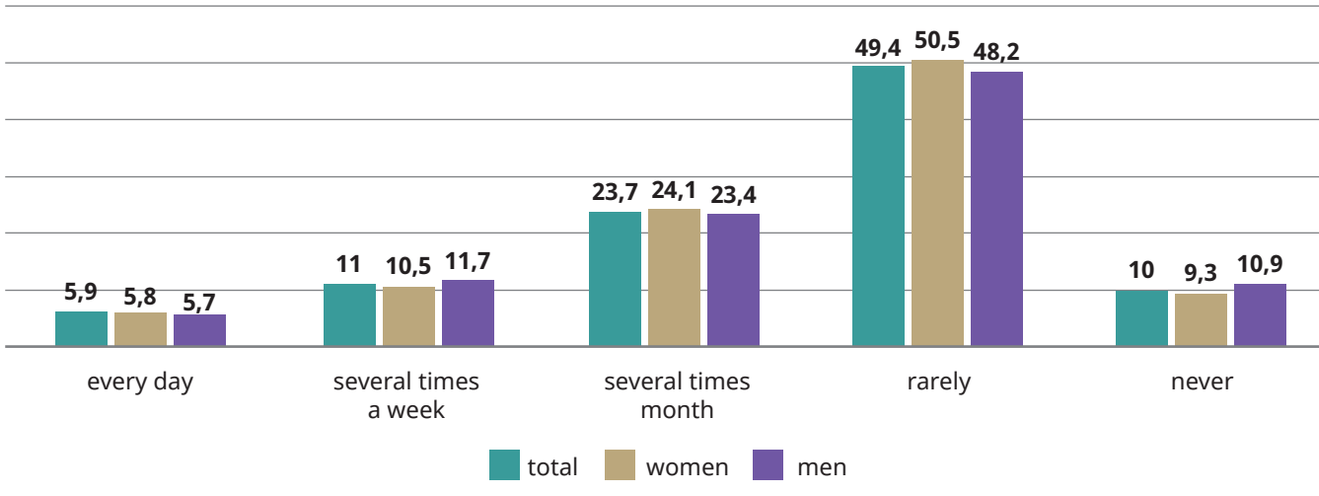


Fig. 23. Frecvența utilizării taxiului de către respondenți, per total și per gen, %

In residential areas, the urban population uses taxis more frequently on an occasional basis (51%) than the rural population (46.2%). At the same time, the proportion of the rural population that never uses taxis (13.7%) is higher than that of the urban population (8.2%).

Analyzing the data by gender, it can be seen that women use taxis occasionally in a slightly higher proportion (50.5%) than men (48.2%), and even the frequency of use several times a month is slightly higher among women (24.1%) compared to men (23.4%). On the other hand, the percentage of men who never use taxis (10.9%) slightly exceeds that of women (9.3%).

Use of electric scooters. Survey data show that two-thirds of respondents never use electric scooters, and the proportion of women who do not use this means of transport is significantly higher than among men (56.4%).

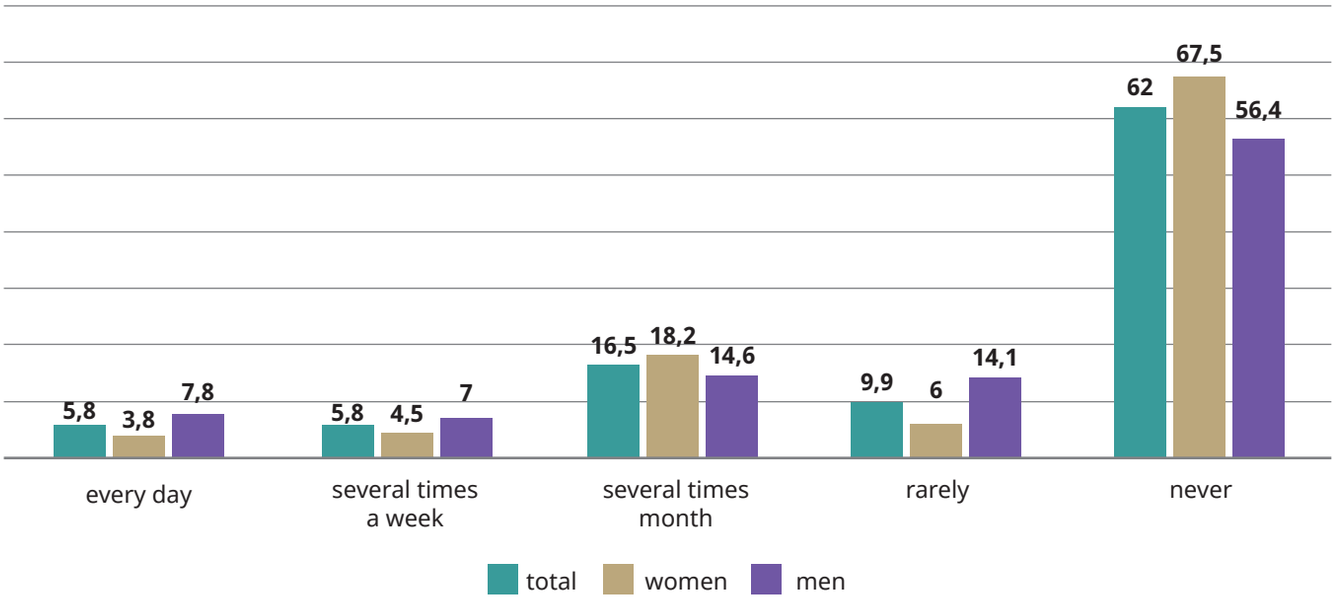


Fig. 24. Frequency of electric scooter use by respondents, overall and by gender, %

Of the total population, 16.5% use electric scooters several times a month, 9.9% use them rarely, and 5.8% say they use them either several times a week or daily. Analyzing usage by gender, it can be seen that women use electric scooters several times a month in a higher proportion (18.2%) than men (14.6%). In contrast, men are more likely to use electric scooters daily (7.8%) or several times a week (7%) compared to women (3.8% and 4.5%, respectively). These differences highlight both distinct preferences and possible barriers to access or safety that are perceived differently by men and women.

The analysis of transport usage frequency highlights significant differences between women and men in the Republic of Moldova, both in the choice of modes of transport and in the frequency of their integration into daily activities. Women use public transport (buses) more often, especially during the week or month, which is correlated with greater family responsibilities and reduced access to personal means of transport. Walking is also practiced daily by a higher proportion of women than men, reflecting a preference for short distances and the impact of social roles within the family.

Bicycle use remains predominantly male, with men using this form of transport much more frequently, both daily and weekly. Differences arise from perceptions of safety, women's additional responsibilities, and limited access to their own bicycles. When it comes to cars, men use them daily in greater proportions than women, favored by easier access to motor vehicles and traditional family roles, while women use cars more rationally (weekly or monthly), due to lower incomes and reduced vehicle ownership.

Taxis are used occasionally by both genders, but women resort to this option slightly more frequently, often to compensate for lack of access to other means of transport or for safety reasons. Electric scooters are less popular with women due to perceived risk, lack of confidence in traffic, and limitations imposed by family responsibilities.

The disparities observed between women and men in the choice and frequency of use of transport modes are the result of a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and practical factors. These include:

Access to resources: men are more likely to have access to personal means of transport, which allows them greater and faster mobility.

Social roles and family responsibilities: women are often responsible for household and care tasks, which influences their choice of travel modes (walking, public transport).

Safety and infrastructure: Women are more sensitive to safety conditions and infrastructure quality, which can discourage them from using bicycles or electric scooters.

Income and property: income disparities and lower car ownership among women limit their access to personal transportation.

Cultural norms and perceptions: Stereotypes about the role of women or men in the family and society are also reflected in mobility habits.

In conclusion, the frequency with which women and men use different means of transport reflects not only individual preferences, but also the social, economic, and cultural context in which they live. To reduce these differences, it is important to develop inclusive mobility policies that take into account the specific needs and barriers of each gender, so that everyone can enjoy the right to mobility on an equal basis.

Reasons why different means of transport are not used.

Bus. According to the research, the main reasons cited for not using this means of transport are: lack of preference (30%), lack of convenience, especially when it is necessary to transport several items or to be accompanied by children (25.4%), inaccessibility (absence of bus stops nearby) – 21.6%, lack of time and slow bus speed (17%), and lack of available buses (14.8%).

From a gender perspective, women more frequently cite lack of accessibility (no nearby stations) as a reason, with 24.4% of them mentioning this issue, compared to only 18.9% of men. On the other hand, men more often state that they do not use the bus because they do not like it (34.5%), consider it inconvenient when they have to carry objects or be accompanied by children (27.7%), and because of lack of time or slow travel speed (20.3%).

Car. The data presented above shows that almost one in ten people do not use a car. Among the reasons cited by respondents are not owning a car (68%), inability to drive or use a car (14%), lack of preference for this means of transport (13.3%), and health problems that prevent its use (11%).

Analyzing gender differences, it is noteworthy that a higher percentage of women indicated the lack of car ownership as the main reason (73%), compared to men (63.7%). Women also report a higher proportion of not being able to use a car (17% compared to 10.3% of men). In contrast, men show a lower preference for traveling by car (17.1% do not like to travel by car, compared to 9.2% of women).

Gender differences in the reasons for not using a car can be explained by several factors specific to the social, economic, and cultural context in the Republic of Moldova. Firstly, the higher percentage of women who indicate that they do not own a car reflects, on the one hand, disparities in income and access to material resources, with women generally having fewer financial opportunities than men. In addition, social norms and traditional gender roles can influence the distribution of assets within the family, with cars often being registered or used predominantly by men.

At the same time, the fact that a higher percentage of women say they cannot use a car can be attributed to additional barriers: lack of a driver's license, lack of driving experience, increased family responsibilities (such as childcare or housework), and possible fears related to safety or road infrastructure. In many cases, women have not had the same opportunities as men to learn to drive or to practice driving, which perpetuates this difference.

Bicycle. As mentioned above, almost half of respondents said they never use a bicycle. When asked about the reasons for this choice, 48.4% indicated that they did not own a bicycle, 23.5% mentioned that they did not prefer this means of transport, 20% considered that it was not convenient to use a bicycle when transporting objects or accompanying children, and 17.2% cited feelings of insecurity. In addition, 14.1% mentioned health problems as an obstacle, 12.7% did not know how to use a bicycle, and 11.2% cited unfavorable weather.

Analyzing the responses according to place of residence, no significant differences were observed. However, it is noteworthy that the proportion of urban respondents who cited lack of comfort (the need to transport items or children) as a reason for not using a bicycle (23.4%) is almost double that of rural respondents who mentioned the same issue (12.3%).

From a gender perspective, we observe that men more often mention the lack of their own bicycle (49.5%) and a lack of preference for this means of transport (26.2%) as reasons for not using a bicycle, compared to women (47.8% and 21.6%, respectively). On the other hand, women indicate to a greater extent the difficulty of transporting objects or being accompanied by children (21.3%), feeling unsafe in traffic (19.3%), and health problems (16.2%) as the main obstacles, exceeding the percentages recorded for men for the same reasons (18.3%, 14.3%, and 11.1%, respectively). This suggests that women more often face additional responsibilities (such as transporting children), but also increased perceptions of risk or physical constraints. In conclusion, these differences reflect not only individual preferences, but also social roles, perceptions of safety and accessibility, and practical challenges specific to each gender.

Electric scooters. The research highlights several reasons why electric scooters are rarely or never used. The main barrier is not owning a scooter (60.7%), followed by disinterest or dislike of this means of transport (26.2%), safety concerns (19.1%), not knowing how to use them (17.7%), and the inconvenience of transporting objects or children (13.3%). Analyzing gender differences, it can be seen that women report a higher proportion of not owning a scooter (61.9%), feeling unsafe (20.6%), and not knowing how to use them (23.6%), compared to men (59.3%, 17.2%, and 10.5%, respectively). On the other hand, men are more likely to say they do not like using electric scooters (29.4%) than women (23.4%). These data reflect both limited access to transportation and differences in perception and preferences between women and men, suggesting the need for tailored measures to increase usage and safety among all population groups.

An analysis of the reasons for not using the main means of transport reveals significant differences between women and men, influenced by both accessibility and personal preferences or social circumstances. When it comes to buses, women are more affected by the lack of nearby stops, which indicates a structural access problem, while men more often cite subjective reasons such as lack of preference, convenience, and insufficient time. When it comes to car use, women frequently mention not owning a vehicle and being unable to use one, issues related to material resources and social barriers, while men more often state that they do not prefer this means of transport. With regard to bicycles, men complain about not owning a bicycle and lack of preference, while women highlight the difficulty of transporting objects or children, feelings of insecurity, and health issues. For electric scooters, women more often report not having a scooter, feeling unsafe, and not knowing how to use them, while men say they're just not interested in this mode of transport.

In conclusion, the decision not to use certain means of transport is the result of a combination of access to resources, personal and family responsibilities, risk perception, and individual preferences, reflecting gender differences and social roles specific to the context in the Republic of Moldova.

Differences in the purposes of using means of transport. According to the survey results, approximately two-thirds of respondents use the bus mainly to commute to work or school, and 32.2% use it for various recreational activities. At the same time, 27.9% use the bus to access health and social services, 17.9% to take their children to school or kindergarten, and 6.2% choose it to participate in sports activities (Fig. 25). In terms of gender differences, women use the bus more than men when accessing social or health services (30.2% compared to 27.9%). In contrast, men have a slightly higher share than women in terms of using the bus to commute to work or school (70.9% compared to 68.9%).

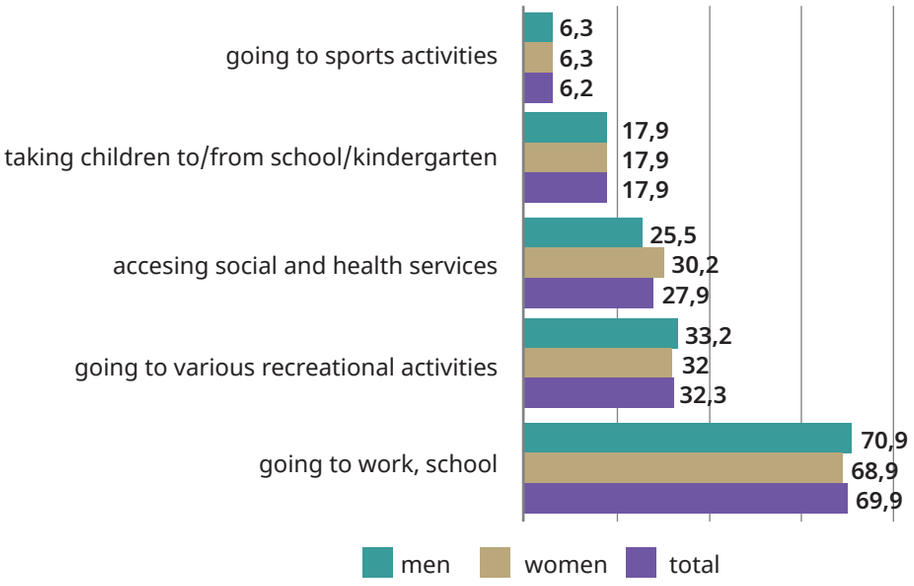


Fig. 25. Bus usage practices, overall and by gender, %

Personal cars are mainly used for commuting to work or educational institutions (61.1%). The next most common uses are for recreational activities (39.3%), accessing social and health services (36.8%), transporting children to school or kindergarten (30.5%), and participating in sports activities (8.9%). Analyzing gender differences, we can see that women use cars more than men for recreational activities (40.9% compared to 37.7%), accessing social and health services (37.3% compared to 36.3%), and taking children to school or kindergarten (37.2% compared to 22.7%). In contrast, men use cars more frequently than women for commuting to work (65% compared to 58.1%).

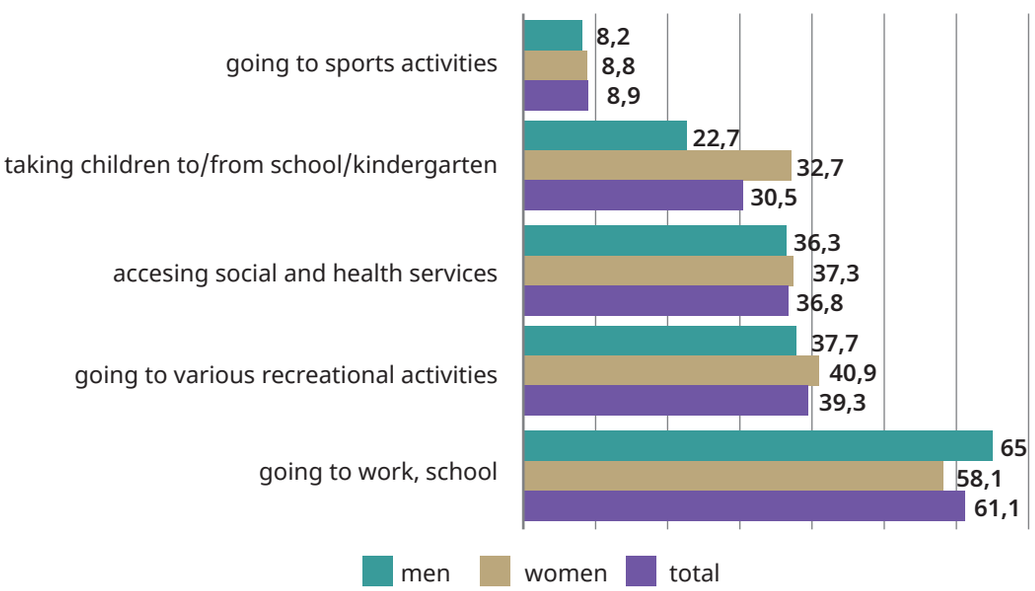


Fig. 26. Car usage practices overall and by gender, %

Walking remains an important option for sporting activities, being preferred by 56.9% of respondents. In addition, 47.8% choose this mode of transport for various recreational activities, and 40% walk to work or school. Approximately one in five respondents walk to accompany their children to school, kindergarten, or to access social and health services. The research does not show significant differences between women and men in terms of this practice. However, it is noted that women prefer walking for recreational activities (50.1% of women compared to 45.6% of men), to access social and health services (21.5% of women compared to 20.2% of men), and to take their children to school or kindergarten (21.8% of women and 19.2% of men). On the other hand, men walk more frequently to get to work or school (41.7% of men compared to 38.7% of women), which reflects a slightly different orientation depending on the social roles and responsibilities assumed by each gender.

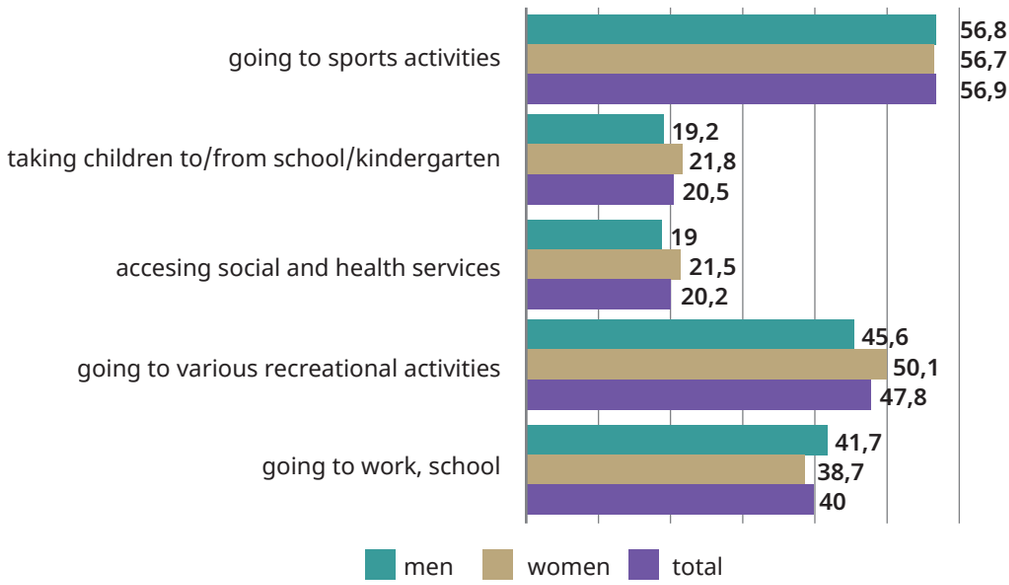


Fig. 27. Walking, overall and by gender, %

Taxis eare mostly used by respondents to go to work or educational institutions (41.6%), for recreational activities (38.3%), to access social and health services (23.7%), and to take children to school (20.8%). Women use taxis more than men to go to work or educational institutions (46% of women and 37.3% of men) and to access social and health services (25.5% of women and 21.5% of men). Men, on the other hand, use taxis more frequently than women to go to recreational activities (41.1% of men and 35.7% of women) and to pick up children from school/kindergarten (23.9% of men and 18.3% of women).

Bicycles are mainly used by respondents to commute to work or educational institutions (47.8%), but also for recreational activities (27.6%), accessing social and health services (25.8%), and transporting children to school or kindergarten (14.2%). When analysed by gender, it can be seen that women use bicycles slightly more than men to go to work or school (48.2% of women compared to 47.2% of men). In contrast, men prefer bicycles for recreational activities (29.2% of men compared to

25.9% of women), to access social and health services (28.3% of men compared to 22.3% of women) and to take their children to school or kindergarten (15.5% of men and 12.4% of women). These differences illustrate the different priorities and responsibilities assumed by each gender in bicycle use, reflecting both personal preferences and distinct social roles.

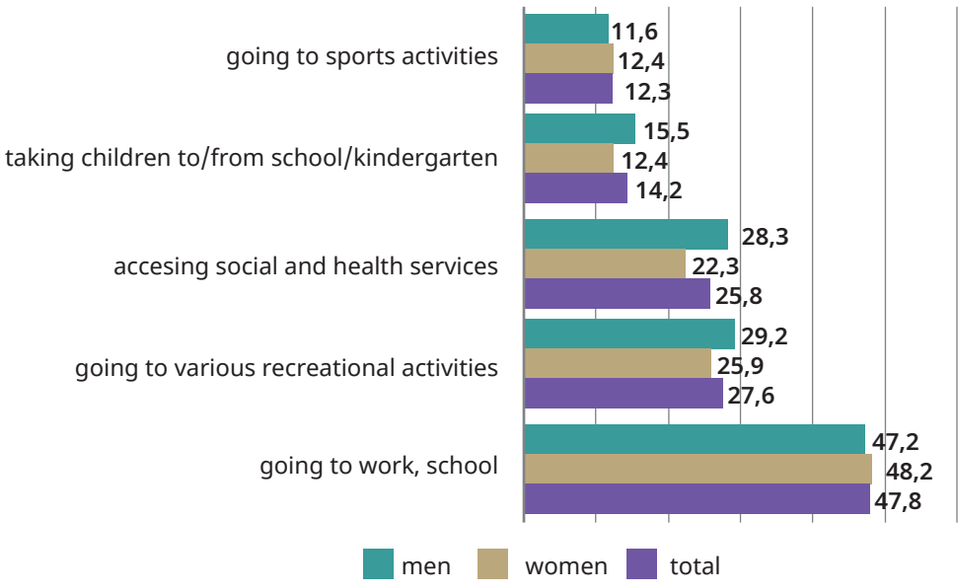


Fig. 28. Bicycle usage practices overall and by gender, %

Electric scooters, although less commonly used, are chosen mainly for commuting (38.4% of men and 28.6% of women), with women showing a slight preference for using them for recreational purposes (30.5% compared to 27.8% of men).

Analyzing the data presented, it can be concluded that the purposes of using means of transport vary significantly depending on gender, reflecting both differences in social roles and distinct priorities of women and men. Women use buses and private cars more frequently to access social and health services and to transport children to school or kindergarten, indicating greater involvement in caregiving and family responsibilities. Women also prefer walking for recreational activities and accessing social services, and they choose taxis more often for commuting to work or educational institutions and for health services.

On the other hand, men use buses and cars more often to commute to work, and walking and cycling are preferred for recreational activities and transporting children to a lesser extent than women. Men use taxis more frequently for recreational activities and to pick up children from school or kindergarten, and they use electric scooters more for commuting. These differences highlight the fact that, although there is some overlap in the use of transport means, their choice and purpose are influenced by traditional gender roles and responsibilities.

3.3. PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY AND SAFETY

43.5% of respondents say they feel very safe when traveling by bus, while 49.1% feel moderately safe and 4.7% do not feel safe at all. The percentage of men who feel safe on the bus is significantly higher than that of women (49.7% of men compared to 38% of women). Approximately half of women said they feel somewhat safe when traveling by bus, and 5.6% of them said they do not feel safe at all.

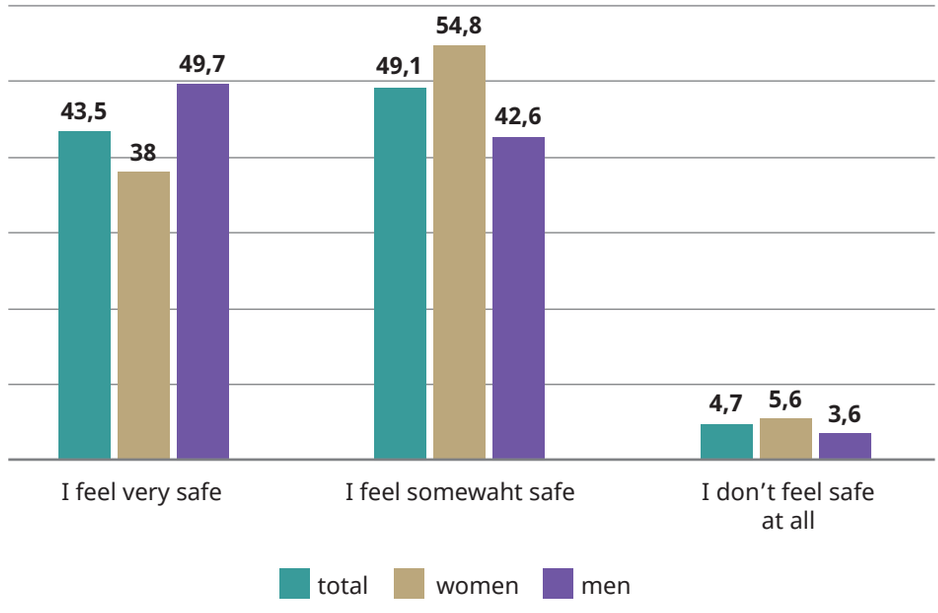


Fig. 29. Respondents' perceptions of safety while traveling by bus, overall and by gender, %

Half of respondents said they feel very safe when traveling by car, while 41.6% said they feel moderately safe, and 5% said they do not feel safe at all. The percentage of men who say they feel very safe is higher than that of women (52.7% of men compared to 48.1% of women). On the other hand, women reported more often than men that they feel somewhat safe (44.7% of women compared to 38.5% of men). Also, 5.2% of men and 4.7% of women said they do not feel safe at all when traveling by car.

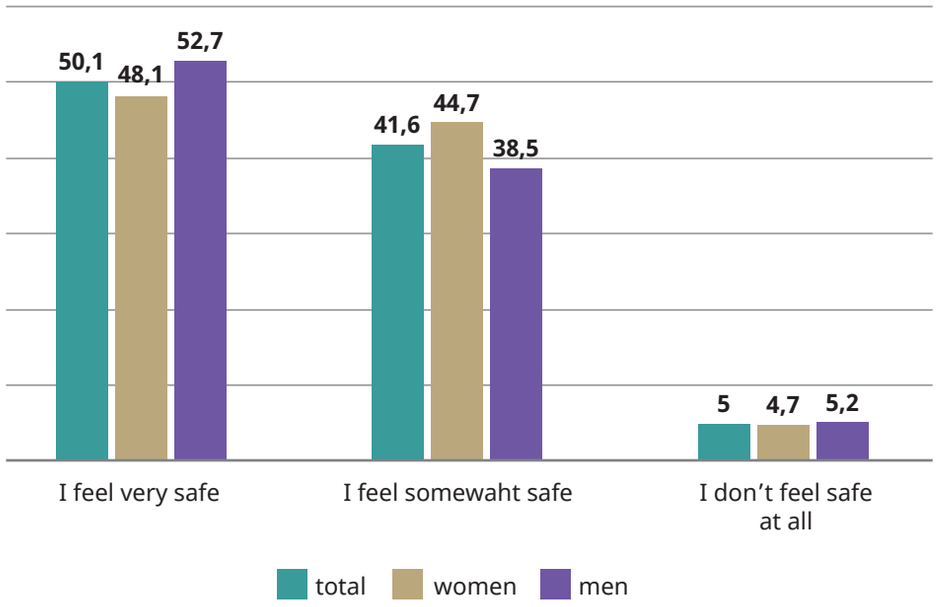


Fig. 30. Respondents' perceptions of safety when traveling by car, overall and by gender, %

54.8% of respondents indicated that they feel very safe when walking, 37.7% feel somewhat safe, and 5.8% feel unsafe. The percentage of men who say they feel very safe is higher than that of women (57.7% of men compared to 52.5% of women). On the other hand, women reported feeling somewhat safe more often than men (40.6% of women compared to 34.6% of men). Also, 6% of men and 5.7% of women said they did not feel safe at all when walking.

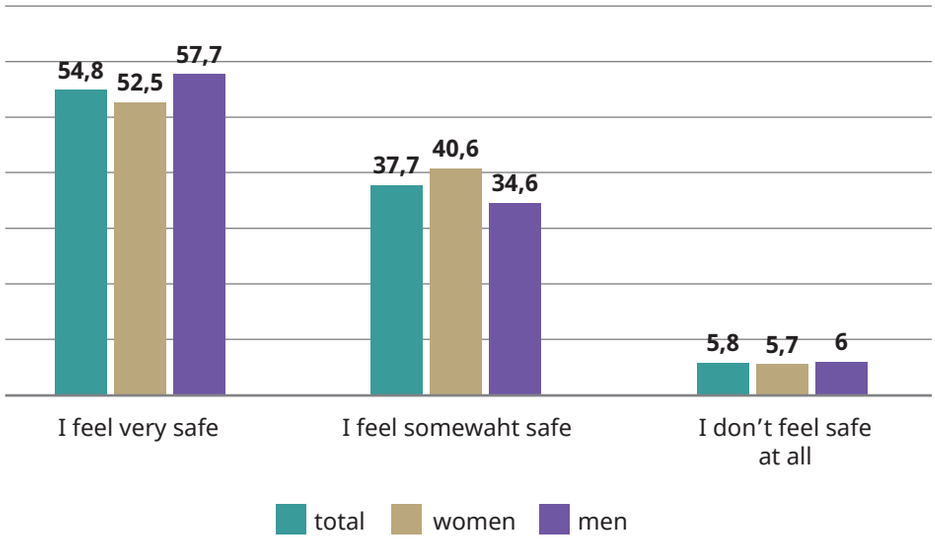


Fig. 31. Respondents' perceptions of safety when walking, overall and by gender, %

Only 34.9% of respondents said they feel very safe when traveling by taxi, while 51.5% said they feel moderately safe, and 8.5% do not feel safe at all. It is noteworthy that a higher proportion of women feel very safe in taxis (38.3%) compared to men (30.6%). On the other hand, men tend to indicate more frequently than women that they feel somewhat safe (56.9% versus 47.2%). In terms of a total lack of feeling safe, 8.9% of women and 8.1% of men said they do not feel safe at all when using taxis.

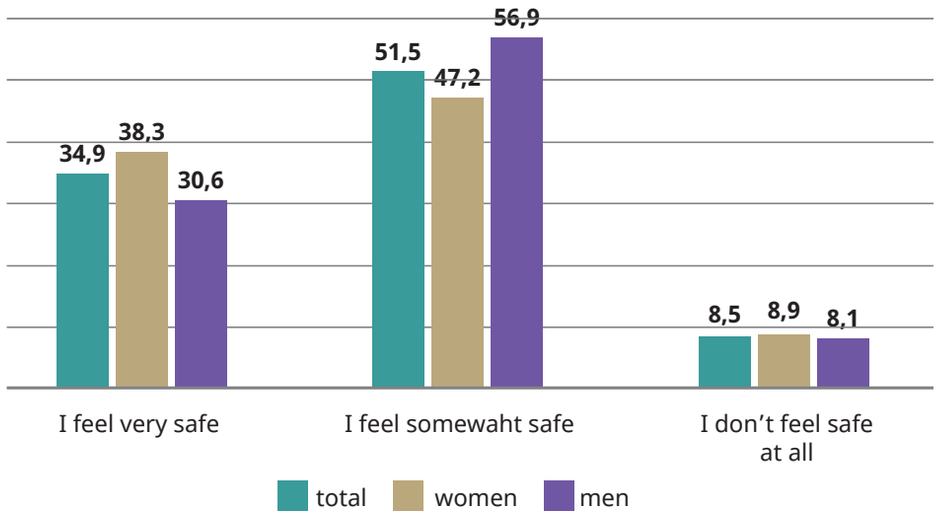


Fig. 32. Respondents' perceptions of safety when traveling by taxi, overall and by gender, %

25.3% of respondents said they feel very safe when traveling by bicycle, 43.9% feel somewhat safe, and 20.6% feel unsafe. The proportion of men who feel very safe is higher than that of women (men – 30.9%, women – 18.7%). The proportion of women who feel somewhat safe is slightly higher than that of men (women – 45.1%, men – 43.3%). At the same time, 25.4% of women compared to 16.7% of men said they feel completely unsafe when traveling by bicycle.

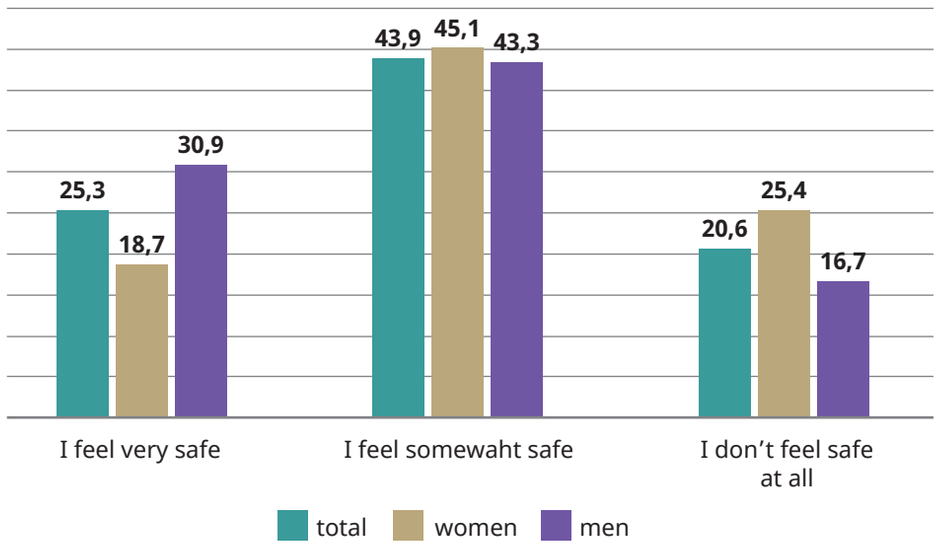


Fig. 33. Respondents' perceptions of safety when cycling, overall and by gender, %

When asked about how safe they feel when traveling alone by bus, either during the day or at night, 43% of respondents said they feel safe using the bus at any time. However, 34.1% do not feel safe during the day, and 27.5% do not feel safe at night. The percentage of men who say they feel safe at any time is higher than that of women (47.1% of men compared to 39.7% of women). On the other hand, a higher proportion of women do not feel safe traveling alone by bus at night (33.2% of women compared to 21.3% of men).

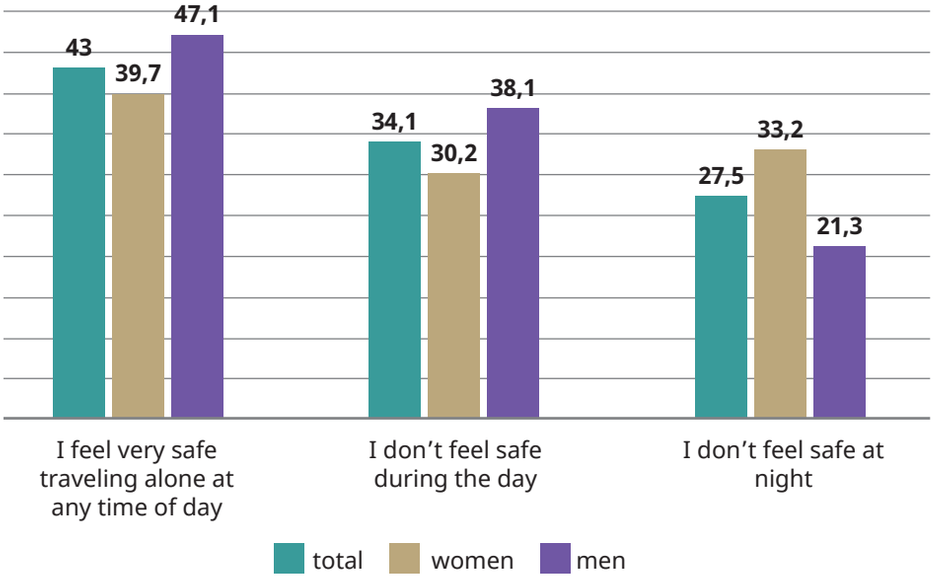


Fig. 34. Respondents' perceptions of the safety of traveling alone on a bus, during the day and at night, overall, by gender, %

33.3% of respondents said they feel safe walking regardless of the time of day, while 39.6% do not feel safe at night and 32% do not feel safe during the day. Analyzing gender differences, it can be seen that the proportion of women who do not feel safe walking at night (48.8%) is significantly higher than that of men (29.3%).

Only 26.2% of respondents say they feel safe cycling regardless of the time of day, while 44.5% do not feel safe at night and 35.6% do not feel safe during the day. Analyzing gender differences, we observe that a significantly higher proportion of women (53.3%) than men (34.6%) do not feel safe cycling alone at night. During the day, 37.1% of women and 33.8% of men indicate that they do not feel safe when traveling by bicycle.

When it comes to using taxis, 38% of respondents say they feel safe at any time of day, but 43.5% do not feel safe at night and 24.7% do not feel safe during the day. Women feel more vulnerable than men when traveling alone by taxi at night: 47.8% of women, compared to 38.7% of men, say they do not feel safe in these circumstances.

When asked how safe they feel when walking on sidewalks during the day, 38% of respondents said they feel very safe, 48.6% said they feel somewhat safe, and 11.6% said they do not feel safe at all. Analyzing the responses by gender, it can be seen that men have a higher percentage of high safety (44.3%) than women (32.3%). In contrast, women tend to indicate more frequently than

men that they feel only somewhat safe (53.1% of women compared to 43.9% of men), and a higher proportion of women also say they do not feel safe at all on sidewalks (13.3% compared to 10.2% of men).

At night, only 15.2% of respondents said they feel very safe when walking on sidewalks, while 39.7% feel moderately safe and 40.2% do not feel safe at all. The analysis by gender highlights significant differences: a higher proportion of men feel very safe on sidewalks at night (18.8%) compared to women (11.6%). Also, the proportion of men who feel moderately safe is higher (43.2% compared to 36.9% of women). In contrast, women feel much more unsafe at night, with 46.9% of them saying they do not feel safe at all, compared to 32.6% of men.

An analysis of the level of safety felt by respondents when traveling by various means of transport shows that walking, traveling by bus, or traveling by car are perceived as the safest options. In contrast, traveling by bicycle or taxi is associated with a higher level of insecurity, especially at night. Gender differences are significant: women are more likely than men to say they do not feel safe in any mode of transport, regardless of the time of day. This highlights the need for additional measures to increase women's safety in public spaces and to promote a more inclusive and safer transport environment for all.

3.4. RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the main goals of this research was to check out people's thoughts on climate change and how transportation affects it, as well as to understand how respondents see their own role in reducing the effects of these changes.

According to the data obtained in the research, approximately 63.4% of respondents say they are very concerned about climate change, 27.3% feel a low level of concern, and 4.1% are not at all concerned about this issue. The analysis by gender highlights a significant difference: the proportion of women who express high concern about climate change is considerably higher than that of men (71.8% of women compared to 54.5% of men). Also, over 40% of men say they are only slightly concerned or not at all concerned about the problems caused by climate change.

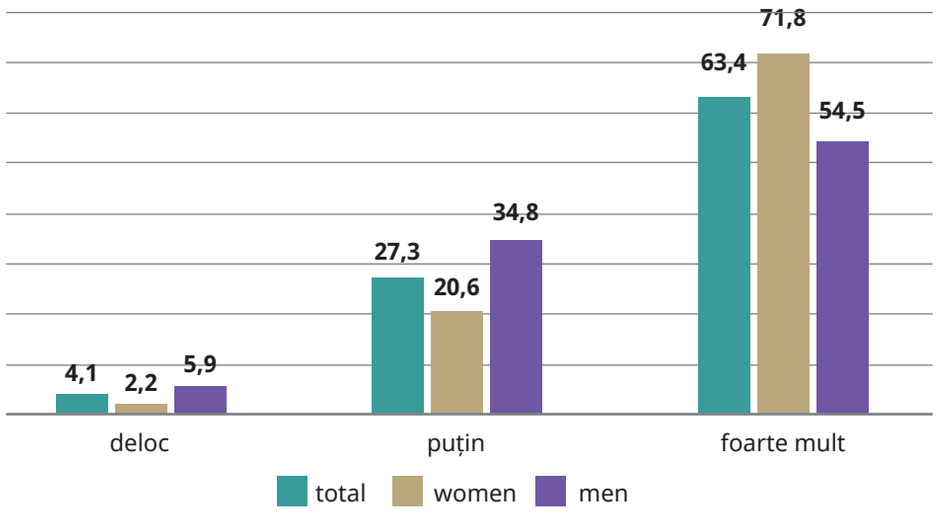


Fig. 35. Respondents' level of concern about climate change, overall, by gender, %

When asked if they believe they can contribute to reducing or preventing climate change, 10.4% of respondents said they can have a very large impact, 25.3% are convinced they can help to some extent, 42.6% believe they can only contribute on a small scale, and 13.8% believe they cannot have any influence. By gender, the proportion of women who believe they could contribute to a small or large extent is higher than that of men (see Fig. 35). The proportion of men who said they cannot contribute anything is higher than that of women (men – 16.8%, women – 10.8%).

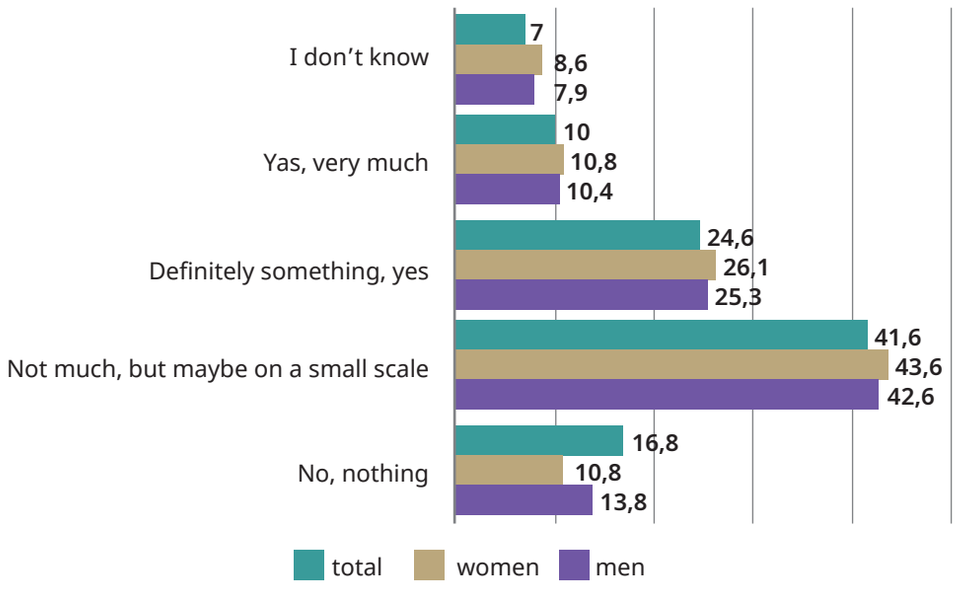


Fig. 36. Respondents' perceptions of their possible personal contribution to climate change prevention, overall, by gender, %

For those who stated that they cannot contribute at all to preventing climate change, the main reasons given were as follows: they believe that responsibility lies with the government (39.3%), switching to another means of transport is too expensive (31.8%), many people should make a change but do not, so they do not see why they should be the ones to take action (18.4%), they do not believe in climate change (17.2%), the issue is not a personal priority (15.9%), or they do not consider climate change to be directly relevant to them (11.3%).

There are significant differences between the reasons given by women and men for their lack of involvement in preventing climate change. Women tend to mention more often that switching to another means of transport is too expensive (40.7% of women compared to 24.6% of men) and that they do not believe in climate change (19.5% of women compared to 14.8% of men). On the other hand, a higher proportion of men believe that responsibility lies with the government (43.4% compared to 36.3% of women), that many people should make a change but are not doing so, so they do not see why they should be the ones to take action (18.9% of men compared to 17.7% of women) , that this issue is not a personal priority (19.7% of men compared to 10.6% of women) or that the issue of climate change does not directly concern them (14.8% of men compared to 8% of women).

The differences between the reasons given by women and men for their lack of involvement in climate change prevention can be explained by a combination of social, economic, and cultural factors that influence the perceptions and priorities of each gender. Women tend to feel more acutely the costs associated with changing their means of transport, often reflecting greater economic vulnerability or increased concern for household expenses. Also, a larger proportion of women say they do not believe in climate change, which may be related to their level of information, access to educational resources, or the influence of their social environment.

On the other hand, men are more inclined to shift responsibility to the authorities or society in general, considering that individual action is less relevant. This may reflect a more pragmatic attitude or even a tendency to downplay the importance of personal involvement in global issues. At the same time, men are more likely to believe that climate change does not directly affect them or that this issue is not a priority for them, which may be related to different personal priorities or their perception of their role in society.

When asked to what extent they would be interested in using electric cars if they were available to prevent climate change, 48.3% of respondents indicated very much, 28% to some extent, 15% not at all, and 8.7% did not know.

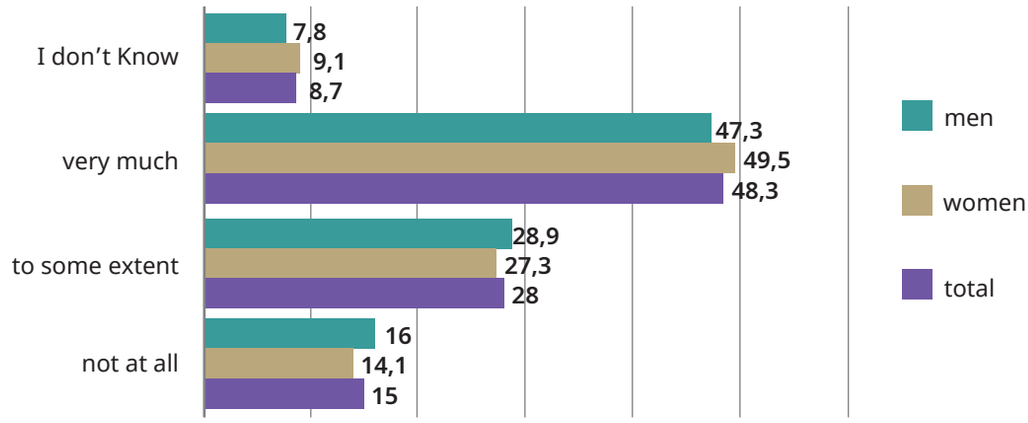


Fig. 37. Respondents' level of interest in using electric cars, if they were affordable, overall, by gender, %

Depending on gender, the proportion of women who are very interested in using electric cars is higher than that of men (women – 49.5%, men – 47.3%). At the same time, the proportion of men who are somewhat interested is higher than that of women (men – 28.9%, women – 27.3%), as is the proportion of those who are not interested at all (men – 16%, women – 14.1%).

When asked about the reasons for their lack of interest in using electric cars, 58.8% of respondents mentioned their high price, and 37.6% indicated their lack of availability on the market. When analyzed by gender, it can be seen that the percentage of men who consider electric cars too expensive (59.8%) slightly exceeds the percentage of women with the same opinion (58.5%). Also, more men (39%) than women (35.4%) cited lack of availability as a reason for their lack of interest in electric cars.

Regarding willingness to share a personal car, the results show that 43.4% of respondents are not at all interested in this option, 28% express moderate interest, 10.4% are very interested, and 18.3% do not have a clear opinion. The analysis by gender shows that women are less willing to share their own car, as the percentage of those with no interest is higher among women (44.8%) than among men (41.8%). At the same time, men are more open to this practice, with a higher percentage of those who are very interested among them (12.7%) than among women (8.4%).

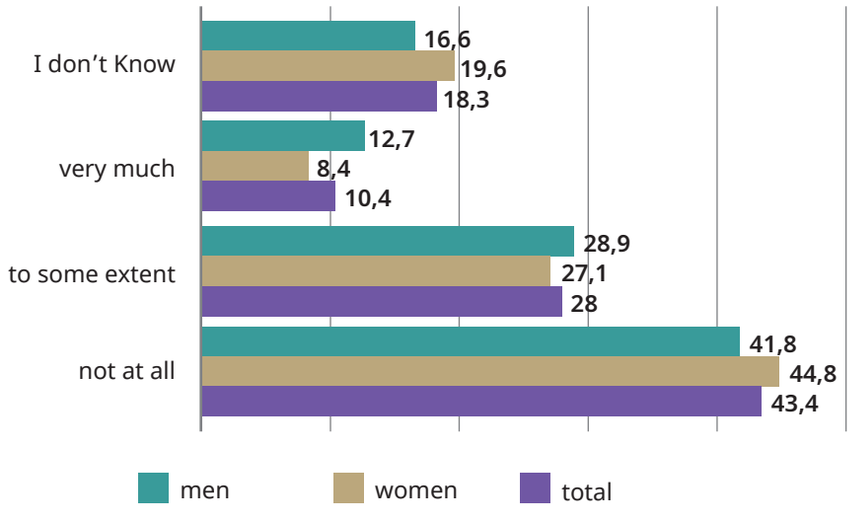


Fig. 38. Respondents' level of interest in sharing personal cars, if accessible, overall, by gender, %

When asked about their lack of interest in sharing personal cars, 51.6% of respondents mentioned their preference for independence, 31.9% cited feelings of insecurity, and 22.6% highlighted the difficulty of coordination. It should be noted that the differences between the opinions of women and men are insignificant.

Regarding interest in using the bus as a means of transportation for travel, the data shows that 14.8% of respondents are not interested at all, 47.8% are moderately interested, 31.6% are very interested, and 5.9% do not have a clear opinion. Analyzing the results by gender, it can be seen that women are more open to this option: 50% of them show moderate interest (compared to 44.9% of men), and 33.7% are very interested (compared to 31.6% of men). On the other hand, men are more numerous among those who show no interest in using the bus, with a percentage of 18.8%, while among women this percentage is 11.2%.

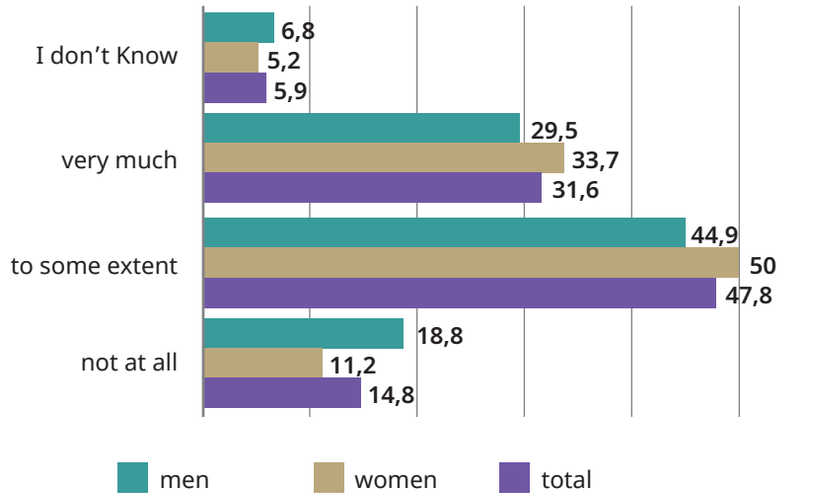


Fig. 39. Respondents' level of interest in using buses for travel, overall, by gender, %

When asked about the reasons for their lack of interest in using buses for travel, more than half of respondents (52.1%) mentioned that buses run too slowly, 30.1% pointed to inadequate connections, and 27.6% highlighted a lack of accessibility. Analysis by gender reveals that men are more likely than women to consider the slow speed of buses as the main reason for their lack of interest: 57.3% of men compared to 43.1% of women cited this problem.

According to the data collected, 15.5% of respondents said they were not at all interested in using regular bicycles for travel, 30.5% expressed moderate interest, and 48.8% were very interested in this option. The gender analysis shows that men are more willing than women to use bicycles for travel: 52.3% of men expressed a very high interest, compared to 46% of women. At the same time, the percentage of women who are not at all interested in using bicycles (16.5%) is higher than that of men (13.9%).

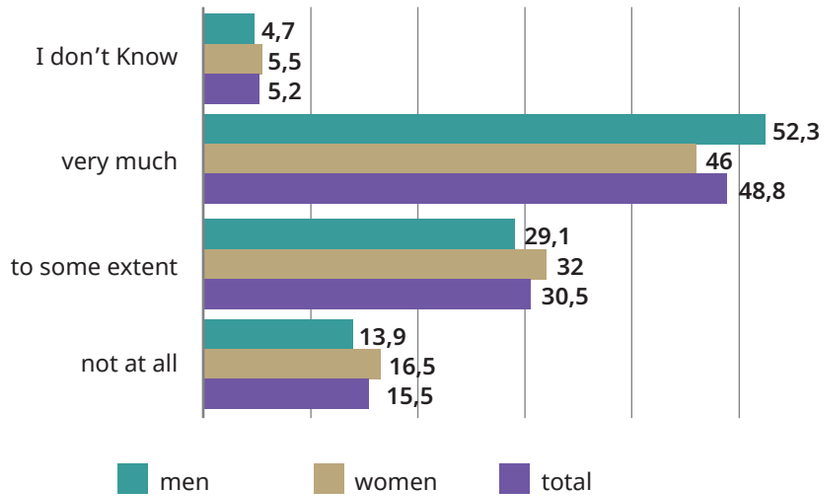


Fig. 40. Respondents' level of interest in using regular bicycles for travel, overall, by gender, %

When asked why they are not interested in using bicycles, 36.3% of respondents said they do not like this option, 29.2% cited the lack of designated bike lanes, 24.6% consider it too dangerous, 18.1% say bicycles are too slow, and 9.9% believe it is too expensive. Analyzing by gender, it can be seen that women are less attracted to bicycles because they do not like them (41.7% compared to

28.2% of men) and because of their perception of danger (27.1% of women, 22.5% of men). On the other hand, men more frequently cite the lack of designated bike lanes (31% compared to 29.2% of women), the slow speed of bicycles (25.4% of men, 12.5% of women), and the price, which they consider too high (11.3% of men, 8.3% of women).

When it comes to interest in using electric bikes, 17.4% of respondents said they weren't interested at all, 34.2% were moderately interested, 39.5% were very interested, and 9% didn't have a clear opinion. Analyzing the results by gender, it can be seen that men are more open to this option (41.6% very interested) than women (37.8%). At the same time, the proportion of women with no interest in electric bikes (19.1%) exceeds that of men (15.4%), highlighting a slight unwillingness among women towards this type of alternative transport.

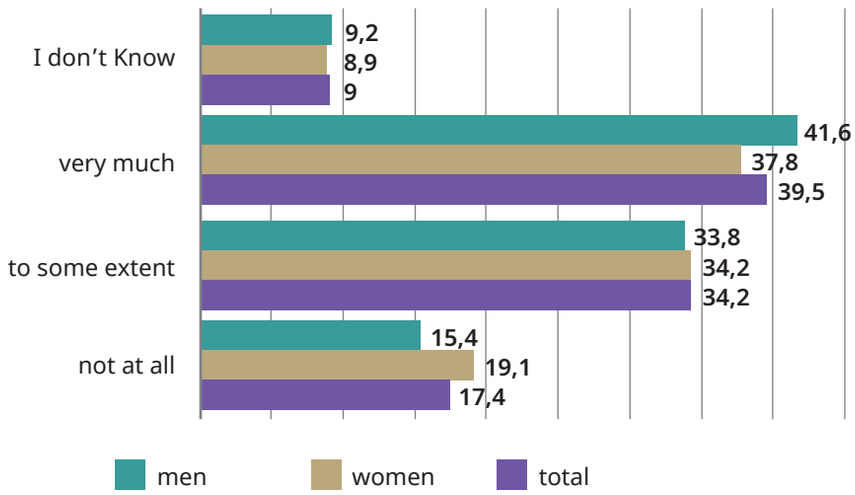


Fig. 41. Respondents' level of interest in using electric bicycles, overall, by gender, %

When asked about the reasons for their lack of interest in using electric bikes, 36.1% of respondents said they did not like this option, 33.5% said it was too dangerous, 25.7% pointed to the lack of designated routes, and 24.1% considered electric bikes to be too expensive. Analysis by gender shows that women are more reluctant to use this means of transport because of their perception of danger (41.4% of women, compared to 22.6% of men) and the lack of dedicated routes (28.8% of women, 21.5% of men). On the other hand, men are more disinterested because they do not like this type of transport (36.7% of men, 35.1% of women) and because of the high price (31.6% of men, 18.9% of women).

68.5% of respondents say they are very interested in walking, 20.8% show moderate interest, and 7.7% are not at all interested in this option. The analysis by gender shows that women are more likely to prefer walking: 74.1% of women, compared to 62.7% of men, are very interested. Also, the proportion of men who are not at all interested in walking (11.3%) is significantly higher than that of women (4.3%).

Respondents who are not interested in walking cited as main reasons that this mode is too slow (71.8%) and that it poses safety risks (29.4%). Analysis by gender shows that disinterest in walking due to its slow speed is more pronounced among women (84%) than men (67.2%). In contrast, men are more concerned about the dangerous aspect of walking (32.8%) than women (20%).

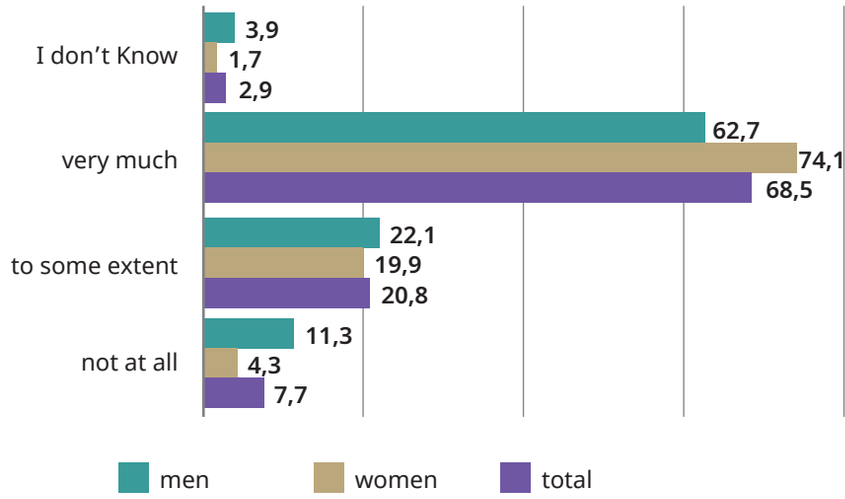


Fig. 42. Respondents' level of interest in walking, overall, by gender, %

Among respondents, 23.3% stated that they were not at all interested in using electric scooters, 33.8% expressed moderate interest, and 32.9% were very interested in this option. Approximately one in ten respondents did not express a preference. The analysis by gender shows that men are more attracted to using electric scooters, with 38.1% of them expressing a very high interest, compared to 28.2% of women. At the same time, the proportion of women who are not at all interested in electric scooters (25.1%) is higher than that of men (21.1%).

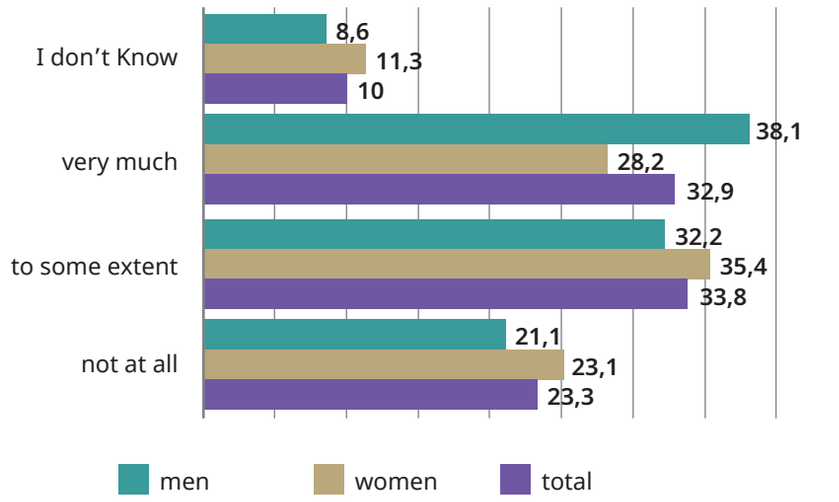


Fig. 43. Respondents' level of interest in using electric scooters, overall, by gender, %

Respondents cited the following reasons for not using electric scooters: they are very dangerous (48.8%), they do not like them (43%), there are no designated trails (28.5%), they are too expensive (15.6%). The proportion of women who consider scooters dangerous is higher than that of men (women – 50.7%, men – 47.2%).

A percentage of 22.5% of respondents showed no interest in using trolleybuses or trams as an alternative means of transport, while 31% showed moderate interest and 33.6% said they were very interested in this option. Approximately 12.8% of participants were unable to express their preferences. Analyzing the results by gender, it can be seen that women show a higher interest in trolleybuses or trams (35.4%) compared to men (32%). On the other hand, men are more numerous among those who do not prefer this type of transport at all (24.6% compared to 20.8% for women).

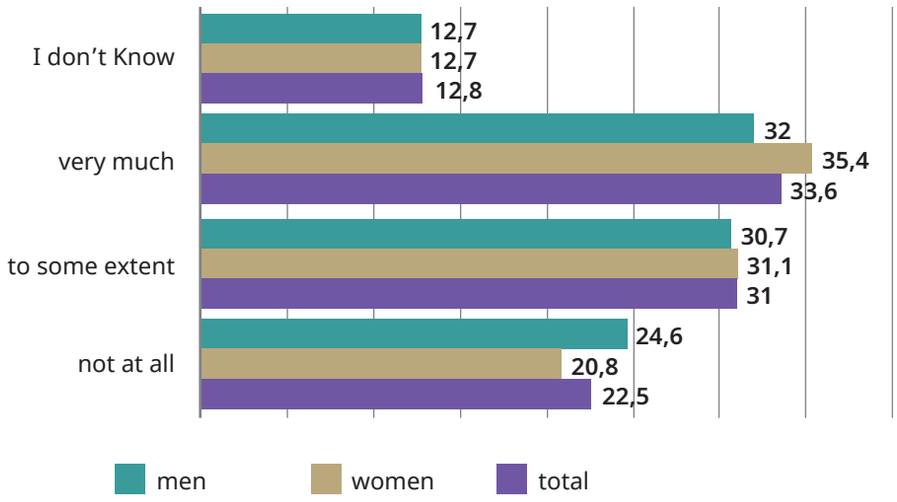


Fig. 44. Respondents' level of interest in using trolleybuses/trams, overall, by gender, %

Analysis of the collected data highlights significant disparities between women and men in terms of perceptions, motivations, and level of interest in alternative transport. Women show a high level of interest in options considered safe and accessible, such as walking and public transport (trolleybuses, trams, and buses), and are also more concerned about safety and costs. Their unwillingness to use bicycles, e-bikes, and e-scooters is mainly due to their perception of danger and the lack of adequate infrastructure. When it comes to car sharing, women are more reserved, citing the need for independence and a feeling of insecurity.

On the other hand, men are more open to using individual or innovative means of transport, such as bicycles, electric bicycles, and electric scooters. They tend to adopt a more pragmatic approach, focusing on practical issues and often shifting responsibility for improving transport to the relevant authorities or society, being less concerned about safety or personal costs.

Thus, the different priorities and motivations between women and men show that in order to increase the attractiveness of alternative transport, integrated policies are needed that respond to the needs of both genders: improving safety, increasing accessibility, and providing better information. This is the only way to avoid the risk of each category acting separately, and make sustainable mobility a natural choice for all, not just a theoretical alternative.

Respondents were also asked what their priorities would be for investing in better, cleaner, safer transport options.

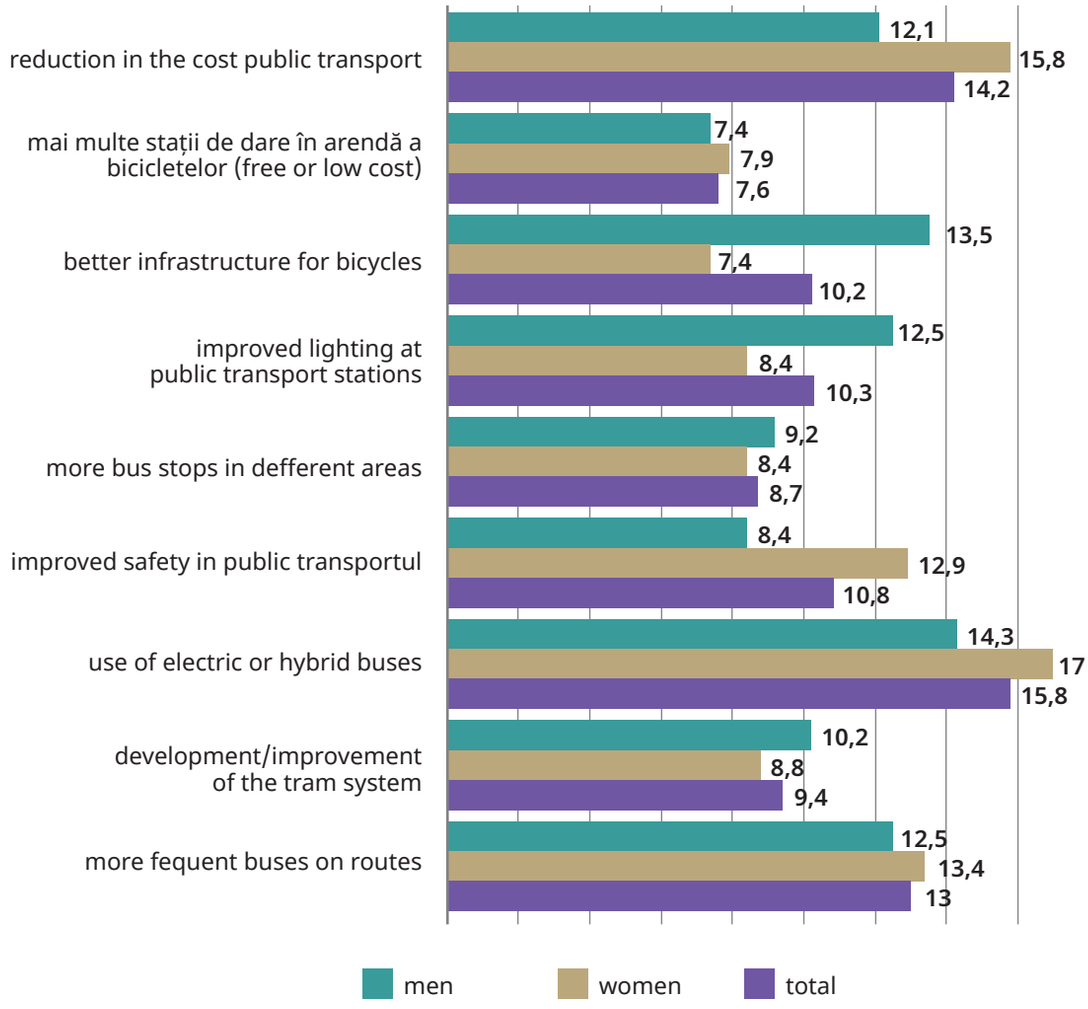


Fig. 45. Respondents' perceptions of priorities for investment in better, cleaner, safer transport options (first choice), overall, by gender, %

The research results showed that the main priorities of respondents for improving the transport system (first option) are the use of electric or hybrid buses (15.8%), reducing the cost of public transport (14.2%), increasing the frequency of buses on routes (13%), improving safety in public transport (10.8%), improving station lighting (10.3%), developing better infrastructure for bicycles (10.2%), and expanding the tram system (9.4%).

The gender analysis reveals distinct differences: women tend to favor electric or hybrid buses (17% compared to 14.3% for men), reduced public transport costs (15.8% compared to 12.1%), and increased bus frequency on routes (13.4% compared to 12.5%). In contrast, men more often opt for improved bicycle infrastructure (13.5% compared to 7.4% of women) and lighting at public transport stations (12.5% compared to 8.4%). These differences highlight the need for adapted policies that address both safety and cost concerns and infrastructure for alternative means of transport.



CHAPTER IV

LOCAL PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING GENDER, DISABILITY, AND CLIMATE RESPONSE

4.1. CHISINAU MUNICIPALITY

The municipality of Chișinău is taking important steps towards developing a sustainable public transport system through strategic initiatives such as the "MOVE IT like Lublin" project and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) 2022-2030.

The "MOVE IT like Lublin" project, implemented in partnership with the municipality of Lublin, Poland, aims to modernize and optimize public transport in Chișinău, drawing inspiration from the most successful European practices. It includes the digitization of transport services, the creation of efficient routes, improved accessibility for all categories of users, and increased attractiveness of public transport through modern and environmentally friendly solutions.

The SUMP 2022-2030 complements these efforts with a long-term strategic vision focused on reducing air pollution and promoting a safe, accessible, and inclusive mobility system. The plan integrates measures to create dedicated lanes for public transport and green modes, develop bicycle infrastructure, and improve pedestrian safety. The SUMP's gender-sensitive approach also ensures that the proposed solutions respond to the different needs of residents, including women, children, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

Infrastructure for persons with disabilities and climate change. Local authorities in Chișinău have initiated various projects to improve the accessibility of urban infrastructure for persons with disabilities. A notable example is the renovation of sidewalks in the historic center, where tactile paving has been installed to facilitate orientation for persons with visual impairments. Also, on 31 August 1989 Street, intersections have been made safer with traffic lights and curb extensions, and tactile paving has been installed in pedestrian areas to help visually impaired people find their way around.

Public transport in Chișinău is diverse, including trolleybuses, buses, and minibuses. Trolleybuses are the most commonly used, with 31 routes, 9 of which are served by autonomously propelled trolleybuses. These vehicles cover both urban and suburban areas, contributing to efficient connectivity between different neighborhoods and suburbs of the city.

Buses complement the public transport network, operating on 22 routes, including 6 urban and 16 suburban lines. They provide a complementary service to trolleybuses, offering additional mobility options for residents of Chișinău and those living in neighboring areas. The routes are designed to serve as many residential areas and points of interest as possible.

Minibuses, also known as maxi-taxis, operate on fewer routes than in previous years. There are currently around 22 minibus lines in the municipality. They are mainly used in areas where access to other types of public transport is limited. However, their number has decreased significantly following the optimization of the public transport network.

Chisinau has made significant progress in modernizing its trolleybus fleet, with 115 new and rewired trolleybuses purchased between 2020 and 2024 to replace older units and improve public transport services. These vehicles are equipped with low-floor design, access ramps for people with disabilities, and air conditioning systems, improving both accessibility and passenger comfort. Despite these improvements, accessibility in public transport remains a major challenge for people with disabilities. While newer trolleybuses and buses are equipped with wheelchair ramps, many bus stops and sidewalks are not properly adapted. In many areas, sidewalks are not leveled to allow easy access to ramps, creating significant obstacles for people with reduced mobility.

Bus and trolleybus stations have undergone partial improvements, but full adaptation for people with disabilities is still limited. Some stations have information boards announcing the next stops, but this system is not implemented on all lines. For passengers with visual impairments, audio announcements of stops are only available in some vehicles, primarily the newest ones. In contrast, passengers with hearing impairments face challenges due to the absence of visual information panels in many older vehicles, making it difficult to access critical travel information.

According to statements by Chisinau City Hall officials, 25 intersections are equipped with sound devices specially designed for people with visual impairments. 205 buses are equipped with access ramps. Of the 434 trolleybuses, 349 are equipped with access ramps[27] and air conditioning is approximately 40% of all trolleybuses in the municipality.[28]

Minibuses, which still play an important role in Chisinau's public transport system, are particularly inaccessible to people with disabilities. They lack ramps, wheelchair spaces, and other essential facilities, effectively excluding people with reduced mobility from using this type of transport. In addition, the absence of a consistent schedule and well-defined operating standards adds to the difficulties faced by these passengers, highlighting the need for extensive improvements in accessibility on all public transport in Chișinău.

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by these service gaps. Without accessible and safe solutions, many face barriers in accessing jobs, public institutions, or essential services. In addition, inadequate stations and vehicles expose them to additional risks, such as accidents when boarding or leaving vehicles.

Bicycle lanes. Chisinau has made significant progress in developing bicycle infrastructure, with over 20 kilometers of continuous bicycle lanes already in place. These cross the city's main arteries, such as Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt Boulevard (7.4 km), 31 August 1989 Street (6 km), Mioriței Street (1 km), and Mircea cel Bătrân Boulevard (4.3 km). In addition, projects such as the bike lane on Albișoara Street, which adds 4.6 km, are currently being realized[29]. The city also has over 22 km of dedicated public transport lanes, which can also be used by cyclists.

---

[27] Radio Moldova (2023, May 25). *Issues regarding accessibility in Chișinău discussed at a civic forum*. Available at: https://radiomoldova.md/p/13242/problemele-privind-accesibilitatea-orasului-chisinau-dezbatute-in-cadrul-unui-forum-civic?utm_source=

[28] Divertisment.md (2025, 17 June). *RTEC head: Only 40% of trolleybuses in Chișinău have air conditioning*. Available at: https://stiri.md/article/social/seful-rtec-doar-40-dintre-troleibuzele-din-chisinau-au-aer-conditionat/

[29] Cycling paths in Chisinau. Available at: https://ipn.md/pistele-pentru-ciclisti-din-chisinau-masoara-peste-20-km/



Fig. 46. Bicycle lanes in Chișinău[30]

After checking out the info on the website of the General Directorate of Public Transport and Roads of the Chisinau City Hall, it looks like the specific details on the money spent just on building bike lanes aren't shown separately. Although there are documents related to the Directorate's overall expenditures, they do not break down the amounts at the level of individual projects, such as bicycle infrastructure.

In addition, the program promotes women's involvement in transport planning and aims to improve accessibility for vulnerable groups. These combined initiatives support Moldova's environmental goals while promoting inclusion and gender equality in urban mobility.

4.2. BĂLȚI MUNICIPALITY

The municipality of Bălți is a good case study for assessing accessibility and gender equality practices in public transport systems. As part of a broader study on the impact of climate change on road transport, the local administration has implemented a series of measures to respond to the different needs of its citizens, including women and persons with disabilities. These initiatives demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive and sustainable transport framework, while highlighting current challenges and areas for improvement.

[30] Ecopresa (2024, 11 April). *A first for the Republic of Moldova: traffic lights for bicycles have been installed on 31 August 1989 Street in Chișinău – greater safety for alternative transport*.
Available at: https://ecopresa.md/semafoare-pentru-biciclete-au-fost-instalate-pe-strada-31-august-1989-mai-multa-siguranta-pentru-transportul-alternativ-din-chisinau/

One of the most effective practices highlighted by the Bălți City Council is the implementation of trolleybuses with autonomous propulsion systems, which can run even without overhead wires, making routes more flexible, allowing them to reach suburban areas, and ensuring transport works smoothly even when the main lines are blocked. These vehicles allow passengers to pay for their journeys using various methods such as cards, cash, or QR codes, significantly improving accessibility and mobility for all citizens. In addition, the municipality closely monitors public transport operators through a centralized dispatch system, which ensures that schedules are met and maintains the efficiency of the transport system.

The municipality has also taken significant steps to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. Buses and trolleybuses have been partially equipped with access ramps, while renovated bus stops partially feature tactile signage and sidewalks adapted for people with reduced mobility or visual impairments. Despite this progress, the city faces major challenges, such as overcrowding during peak hours and insufficient funding for the expansion of transport lines to suburban areas. In addition, climate change is exacerbating these problems, increasing the demand for air-conditioned vehicles to ensure passenger comfort.

To address accessibility issues in outlying areas, the city of Bălți has adapted low-capacity transport routes to better serve isolated communities. Gender equality is also a central objective, with initiatives such as installing lighting at bus stops to increase women's safety and using gender-disaggregated data to improve transport services. Collaboration with disability rights organizations and social centers continues to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are integrated into transport planning and service provision.

Finally, the municipality actively promotes women's participation in the public transport sector. According to data presented by the Bălți City Hall – the Bălți Trolleybus Directorate has organized training courses for trolleybus drivers, with the majority of participants being women. Support programs aim to encourage more women to join this role. In addition, private minibus operators are subject to regular inspections to ensure conformity with safety and accessibility standards. These combined efforts reflect the city's proactive approach to building an inclusive and equitable public transport system that responds to the diverse needs of its population.

Infrastructure for people with disabilities and climate change. The municipality of Bălți recently modernized its trolleybus fleet by purchasing 11 new trolleybuses, financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership Fund (E5P). These vehicles, supplied by the Ukrainian company Torhovyi Dim Litan, are equipped with air conditioning systems, increasing passenger comfort. In addition, 22 long-distance autonomous trolleybuses were purchased in 2023 to connect Bălți with neighboring towns such as Corlăteni, Elizaveta, and Răuțel. Although detailed technical specifications for these new vehicles are not fully available, it is likely that they meet modern comfort standards, including air conditioning. As a result, it is confirmed that at least 11 trolleybuses in Bălți have air conditioning, with the potential for more once the newer vehicles are fully integrated into service.[31]

[31] TVR Moldova (2023, 16 December). *The residents of Bălți will have 22 new trolleybuses*. Available at: https://tvrmoldova.md/article/7e6b36042b82caa0/locuitorii-din-balti-vor-avea-22-de-troleibuze-noi.html?utm_source=

Despite these advances, significant challenges remain in ensuring the accessibility of public transport for persons with disabilities. Discussions with local civil society indicate that neither minibuses nor older buses operating in the city are equipped with facilities such as wheelchair ramps or designated spaces for passengers with mobility needs. In addition, these vehicles do not have air conditioning, which makes them uncomfortable, especially in the summer months. In contrast, newer trolleybuses are better equipped, offering ramps and other accessibility features that partially address these issues.

The sidewalk infrastructure in Bălți has seen gradual improvements, with newer sidewalks designed to include ramps suitable for wheelchair and stroller users. However, tactile paving for people with visual impairments remains rarely installed, limiting their ability to navigate safely and independently. Audible traffic signals are mainly installed in central areas, with limited availability in other parts of the city. However, most public transport stations are equipped with roofs, providing some shelter for waiting passengers.

In terms of urban infrastructure, street lighting in Bălți has undergone significant improvements, with both main and secondary roads benefiting from improved lighting. This improvement contributes to increased safety and visibility for both pedestrians and drivers, especially at night.

Although progress has been made in modernizing public transport and urban infrastructure, Bălți still faces challenges in ensuring equitable access and comfort for all its residents.

Bike lanes. The development of cycling infrastructure in Bălți has made significant progress, but not without difficulties. One example is the bike lane project on Independenței Street, where the mayor contested the execution of the works because of the positioning of traffic signal poles that block the bike lane.

Although the city has some bike lanes, they are fragmented and cover only limited areas, and public data does not mention the total length built. In the center of Bălți, there were plans to build a dedicated lane on the segment between Mihai Viteazu and Pușkin Streets, along the central square, but current information does not confirm the finalization of this project.

4.3. IALOVENI CITY

The city of Ialoveni is currently working on its Mobility Plan, following the example of Chișinău, which already has an operational plan. Part of the costs for developing the plan have been covered. The city has two main public transport routes: trolleybus line 36, which is environmentally friendly and connects the center of Ialoveni with the center of Chișinău, and a private minibus line. While residents are very satisfied with trolleybus line 36, the private minibus service has been criticized for its irregular schedules and inconsistent operation.

Significant progress has been made in modernizing infrastructure, including water supply and sewerage networks. According to the latest available information, the city of Ialoveni has a total of 63 kilometers of sewerage networks, with 47% of households connected to the central sewerage system[32]. In recent years, several projects have been initiated to expand and renovate the sewerage infrastructure: 2018: a new 1.4-kilometer sewerage network was built, and in 2024-2025, external sewerage networks will be built, with a budget of 9 million lei allocated for this purpose. The modernization of the access road to the city of Ialoveni, a regional road administered by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, is a major priority for local authorities. Although the local administration expressed its willingness to finance the project from the local budget, the proposal was rejected, with the ministry committing to repair the road instead. The city council is now waiting for this commitment to be implemented. In addition, there is a strong desire to build an overpass to alleviate heavy traffic and reduce accidents in the area between the Hâncești road and the entrance to Ialoveni on Alexandru cel Bun Boulevard. A feasibility study has already been completed, confirming the need to build this overpass to improve traffic flow and increase safety in the region.

All newly constructed sidewalks are designed for people with disabilities, with ramps and tactile paving for wheelchair users and visually impaired people. In addition, street lighting has been improved with more powerful and energy-efficient LED lights on main and secondary roads, enhancing safety and visibility.

Efforts to address the risks posed by climate change include the cleanup of the Isnovăț River in 2024, which prevented major flooding in September. Although minor flooding did occur, damage to residential areas was minimal. These preventive actions highlight the city's proactive approach to climate-related disaster mitigation.

According to data presented by the Ialoveni City Hall – significant economic challenge for Ialoveni is that 70% of its residents commute to Chișinău for work. This means that most of their income is spent in the capital instead of contributing to the local economy. This situation highlights the need to create more local economic opportunities in Ialoveni to retain economic benefits.

The city demonstrates a commitment to inclusive governance by actively involving civil society in public consultations on development strategies and urban planning. These consultations include organizations representing persons with disabilities, women, and other community activists, ensuring that diverse voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Local residents and civil society organizations. Local residents and civil society organizations in the city of Ialoveni highlighted both progress and areas for improvement in terms of accessibility and inclusion. Although traffic lights have been installed in key areas, not all of them are equipped with audible signals for people with disabilities. Similarly, sidewalk infrastructure is being upgraded, but not all new sidewalks include tactile paving for people with visual impairments. On a positive note, the presence of lowered curbs at pavement entrances has proven beneficial, significantly providing easier access and navigation for both wheelchair users and parents with strollers in certain areas.

Efforts to address employment opportunities for persons with disabilities have been less consistent. Although a local strategy to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce was developed in 2010, it has never been implemented. The lack of implementation has led to a missed opportunity to support economic and social inclusion in the region.

[32] Ialoveni city hall. Water and sewerage services. Available at: https://ialoveni.md/asigurarea-cu-apa-si-canalizare

However, there have been notable successes in public infrastructure. The public transport system, particularly the trolleybus service, is widely appreciated for its accessibility features, including ramps, audio announcements, and electronic displays at stations. The trolleybus route conveniently connects the main street in Ialoveni with the center of Chișinău, where many residents are employed. In addition, improvements to primary and secondary street lighting over the past 3-4 years have increased safety and visibility, contributing positively to the overall quality of life in the community.

Infrastructure for people with disabilities and climate change. Financial report for 2023[33] shows significant investment in road infrastructure, such as the rehabilitation of over 4 km of roads and the construction of sidewalks. However, little attention is paid to integrating gender and disability considerations. Tactile paving has been installed near schools and kindergartens to assist people with visual impairments, but such improvements are limited, leaving many areas without similar measures. Crosswalks have been upgraded for safety and visibility, but the impact on persons with disabilities is not specifically addressed.

Improvements in public transportation include accessible features on trolleybuses on route 36, such as ramps for wheelchair users and audio-visual announcements at stations. Although these changes align with inclusive design, they are limited in scope, leaving many areas and routes less accessible for women and men with disabilities outside the center of Ialoveni.

The city council has allocated MDL 10,057,000.6 for road repairs and MDL 2,900,000 for public transport, including trolleybus maintenance. However, there is no detailed breakdown of the funds specifically directed towards improving accessibility for persons with disabilities.



Fig. 47. The condition of roads in the Ialoveni district[34]

[33] Ialoveni City Hall (February 2024). *Activity report of the Mayor of Ialoveni for the 2023 term of office.* Available at: https://ialoveni.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/RAPORT-2023-.pdf
[34] State Road Administration (2024). *Interactive map – National Road Map*. Available at: https://www.asd.md/harta-interactiva/

Over the past three years, the Ialoveni district has benefited from significant investments in regional road infrastructure, aimed at improving connectivity and traffic safety. A major project is the rehabilitation of the G105 R3 – Costești – Țipala – G106 road, also known as "Corridor 16," which crosses the localities of Pojăreni, Costești, Zâmbreni, Horești, and Țipala. The total investment amounts to over 360 million lei, and the works were carried out in four sections, each between 8 and 9 km long.[35]

In 2023, the State Road Administration has planned ground works in the Ialoveni district worth over 20 million lei. Of this amount, 16.727 million lei were allocated for routine maintenance of national public roads, and 3.47 million lei for periodic maintenance, which includes the construction of bus shelters (bus stops) and sidewalks in the localities of Ruseștii Noi, Milești Noi, and Nimoreni.[36]

Bicycle paths. One remarkable project is the construction of a 1,100-meter bicycle path that will connect the Green Theater to the central district of Ialoveni. This project is part of a broader urban revitalization plan, which also includes a pedestrian zone, lighting, and street furniture. Work began in September 2024, with an estimated duration of 12 months and a budget of approximately 15.1 million lei, financed by the National Fund for Regional and Local Development, with co-financing from the Ialoveni City Hall and the Ialoveni District Council.[37]

4.4. ORHEI MUNICIPALITY

Infrastructure for persons with disabilities and climate change. Discussions with Orhei residents and civil society revealed several accessibility challenges in public transport and infrastructure for persons with disabilities. Public transport is reported to lack essential accessibility features such as ramps, audio announcements, and station notifications. The vehicles used are predominantly small minibuses with narrow footways that can't accommodate two passengers at a time, which limits the mobility of persons with disabilities. Despite the renewal of sidewalks on most of the city's main streets, there are no tactile paving or curb cuts to allow wheelchair users or people with visual impairments to move around.

---

35 Ziarul Național (2022, 5 September). *VIDEO // The road crossing five localities in the Ialoveni district, from Costești to Țipala, is almost 80% complete: investments of over 360 million lei*.
Available at: https://www.ziarulnational.md/video-drumul-caretraverseaza-cinci-localitati-din-raionul-ialoveni-din-costeti-pana-la-tipala-gata-in-proportie-de-aproape-80-investitii-de-peste-360-de-milioane-de-lei/?utm_source=

36 Ialoveni Online (2023, 22 May). *State Road Administration: In 2023, road works worth over 20 million lei are planned in the Ialoveni district.*
Available at: https://www.ialovenionline.md/doc-administratia-de-stat-a-drumurilor-in-2023-in-raionul-ialoveni-sunt-preconizate-lucrari-rutiere-de-peste-20-de-milioane-de-lei/?utm_source=

37 Provincial.md (2023). *Urban revitalization works begin in Ialoveni.*
Available at: http://provincial.md/actual/incep-lucrarile-de-revitalizare-urbana-la-ialoveni?utm_source=

Despite these limitations, public transport in Orhei is free during peak hours (6-9 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.), benefiting primarily older residents and students. However, these periods are characterized by overcrowding, making them less convenient for people with limited mobility.

In terms of road safety and street lighting, pedestrian crossings are highlighted with red lights, increasing visibility at night. In addition, the main and secondary streets in Orhei are equipped with street lighting, contributing to improved safety and navigation after dark. While these developments are positive, they do not address the specific needs of people with disabilities, highlighting the importance of inclusive planning in future projects.

Analyzing the financial reports available on the official website of the Orhei City Hall, we did not identify specific budget allocations for road infrastructure or sidewalks adapted for persons with disabilities. For example, the "Report on the execution of the budget of the Orhei City Hall for 2023" presents general expenses for the repair and maintenance of roads and sidewalks, but without details on specific accessibility adaptations. At the same time, the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Orhei Municipality for 2021-2025[38] emphasizes the importance of creating conditions for access to the city hall for all citizens, including persons with disabilities. It also mentions the commitment of local authorities to support people with special needs, including by providing material assistance and organizing dedicated events.

One noteworthy project is the repair of the R21 road section between kilometers 21.2 and 27.83. Completed in November 2024 the works, involved the modernization of 6.63 km of road, with approximately 80.9 million lei from the road fund. This road connects the towns of Ghetlova, Dîșcova, Vîprova, Hulboaca, and Puțintei, providing optimal traffic conditions and increasing mobility in the region.[39]

Bicycle lanes. A good example is the creation of bicycle lanes in the city park. According to available information, 750 meters of lanes have been created, covering a total area of 2,300 square meters, providing a safe and pleasant space for cyclists. However, most of the main streets in Orhei do not have dedicated lanes. Although the city has routes suitable for cycling, such as Vasile Mahu, Renașterea Națională, and Maxim Gorki streets, these roads do not have infrastructure designed specifically for cyclists.

[38] Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Orhei Municipality for 2021-2025.
Available at: https://orhei.md/i ndex.php?pag=news&id=1021&rid=5011&l=ro

[39] National Road Administration (2024, November 7). *Acceptance upon completion of repair works on the R21 Orhei–Bravicea–Călărași road (km 21.2–27.83).*
Available at: https://www.asd.md/comunicate-de-presa/receptia-la-terminarea-lucrarilor-de-reparatie-drumului-r21-orhei-bravicea-calarasi-km-21-2-27-83/?utm_source=

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender differences in access to and use of transport

1. Women rely disproportionately on public transportation, spending 76.5% of their travel time on public transportation, compared to 40.3% for men. Women also use taxis four times more often, reflecting their dependence on external transportation. Financial constraints further limit women's mobility, with 68.4% of women relying on financial support, compared to 48.6% of men, exacerbating gender inequalities. In addition, women face increased safety concerns, especially at night, with 48.9% of urban women feeling unsafe while walking, compared to 32.9% of urban men.
2. Despite recent improvements, public transport infrastructure is inadequately adapted for people with disabilities, with only 115 new accessible trolleybuses in Chișinău and tactile paving on certain renovated sidewalks. Approximately 40% of people with disabilities consider pedestrian crossings to be unsafe, and almost half (50%) face challenges when traveling to other cities.
3. Public interest in environmentally friendly transport is considerable, with 48.9% of women and 47.5% of men interested in electric cars. Practical barriers remain significant, including high costs (58.8% of respondents consider electric cars to be too expensive), insufficient availability, and safety concerns (50.7% of women consider electric scooters to be dangerous). These factors hinder the wider adoption of environmentally friendly transport solutions.
4. Women in rural areas experience significantly greater barriers to transport access, with 32.7% considering infrastructure to be completely inaccessible, compared to 26.6% in urban centers. In many cases, women do not own personal vehicles, highlighting the major financial barriers and infrastructure differences between rural and urban areas. The proportion of women in rural areas who do not own cars is 73%, compared to 66% in urban areas, highlighting the additional obstacles they face in accessing mobility.
5. In Moldova, gender disparities in vehicle ownership are significant: men own approximately 81.3% of motor vehicles (633,374), while women own only 18.7% (146,251). This imbalance is also evident in urban areas such as Chișinău, where men own 174,770 vehicles compared to 57,032 owned by women. This stark difference reflects deep economic inequalities that limit women's mobility, financial independence, and access to opportunities. That is why it is essential to implement gender-sensitive public policies and investments in infrastructure that support equity.

The high environmental impact of the transport sector:

6. Transportation contributes significantly to air pollution in Moldova, accounting for approximately 86% of total emissions in urban areas such as Chișinău and Bălți. The vehicle fleet is particularly outdated, with many vehicles exceeding 15 years of operation and mainly meeting only Euro I emission standards, substantially increasing pollutants such as particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). Moldova's average annual exposure to PM2.5 is 15.4 μg/m³, well above the WHO recommended level (5 μg/m³). Furthermore, the number of abandoned "ghost cars" has risen sharply, from 80,000 in 2010 to 256,000 in 2024, intensifying environmental and economic pressures.
7. The impact of climate change on Moldova's urban infrastructure is significant, particularly in cities such as Chișinău, where extreme weather events exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Inefficient drainage systems and partially cleaned rivers lead to frequent urban flooding, causing road damage and hindering pedestrian mobility. The influx of private vehicles from suburban areas further strains the city's capacity, exacerbating congestion and air pollution. Similarly, other cities, such as Orhei, face challenges in adopting sustainable transport solutions that address accessibility and environmental issues. This highlights the urgent need for integrated approaches to infrastructure modernization and climate resilience.
8. The problem of congestion highlights the fact that simply building more roads, as seen in Houston, USA, does not solve the problem. Despite having wide highways and extensive road networks, Houston continues to face severe traffic jams. This demonstrates that the main reason is not a lack of roads, but a high dependence on cars. Moldova must learn from such examples and shift its focus to reducing car use by investing in sustainable alternatives. Developing a network of bike lanes and pedestrian areas is essential to encourage people to choose more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as bicycles and electric scooters.

Gaps in policies and budget:

9. Chișinău has made progress, with over 20 km of bike lanes and upgraded sidewalk infrastructure, including tactile paving in some central areas. However, detailed financial transparency on gender-responsive budgeting remains limited, particularly for sidewalk and drainage projects. Bălți has introduced 33 new trolleybuses with accessibility features, but minibuses remain inaccessible. Ialoveni has implemented accessibility improvements on selected sidewalks but lacks extensive coverage, while Orhei struggles with minimal investment in accessible infrastructure despite local initiatives.
10. Moldova's Mobility Strategy 2030 and National Green Agenda highlight commitments to sustainability and gender inclusion, but current state budgets (allocating approximately 4.04 billion Moldovan lei for transport and infrastructure in 2024) do not have gender-disaggregated performance indicators. This makes it difficult to measure how effectively investments in transport benefit women and persons with disabilities. Without targeted budget allocations and clear performance indicators, it remains difficult to assess the impact of public funds on gender equity and inclusion.

Recommended gender-based transportation solutions with climate impact:

For local and municipal public authorities

1. Local authorities must publish detailed information about the costs and funding allocations for projects such as the modernization of sidewalks, sewerage, and transport infrastructure. This would ensure that public funds are used responsibly and transparently. In addition, authorities should implement a clear system for monitoring and reporting on these investments in order to assess their impact and build greater trust among citizens. Although Chisinau has developed a website dedicated to financial transparency, https://www.chisinau.md/ro/transparenta, information about projects to modernize sidewalks, sewerage, or other infrastructure works is not presented in a way that is clear and understandable to citizens. Authorities need to provide explicit and structured details about financial allocations, actual costs, and the implementation status of projects so that residents can assess the use of public funds and the impact of these investments on different users, as well as on people with disabilities.
2. An effective and much less expensive alternative to building a metro system is to develop a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network with dedicated lanes. This solution addresses both the financial and infrastructure constraints of Chisinau, while also providing a reliable path to sustainable urban mobility and reduced harmful emissions. The implementation of an BRT involves the creation of special bus lanes on the main roads with heavy traffic (for example, a north-south axis connecting Rîșcani, the city center, and Botanica, as well as an east-west axis between Ciocana, the center, and Buiucani). An essential component of this network is the construction of modern stations with platforms at the same level as the bus floor, thus facilitating access for people with reduced mobility, such as wheelchair users and parents with strollers. In addition, the implementation of an integrated electronic payment system (e-ticketing) will enable fast and seamless transfers between different lines, increasing the attractiveness and efficiency of public transport. By introducing dedicated lanes and modern vehicles, BRT will ensure faster, more predictable, and more comfortable public transport, significantly reducing travel time on congested routes. Such an approach will lessen dependence on private cars, reduce air pollution, and support urban health. The benefits will be particularly significant for women, older people, and people with disabilities, for whom accessibility and safety in transport are essential. As public transport becomes more attractive, the number of private cars on the road will decrease, contributing to cleaner air and a better quality of life in Chisinau. In the long term, the development of a well-managed BRT will increase connectivity and mobility for all residents of the capital, stimulate social cohesion, and support the Republic of Moldova's goals of reducing CO2 emissions from the transport sector and combating climate change.
3. In smaller towns, such as Orhei, it is absolutely essential to introduce at least one fully accessible minibus route, using low-floor vehicles equipped with wheelchair ramps and priority seating for passengers with disabilities. The implementation of such a pilot route would set an example of good practice for inclusive transport, benefiting not only people with disabilities, but also the elderly and parents with small children in strollers. For the continuous modernization of public

transport, it is recommended to integrate trolleybuses or electric buses equipped with additional accessibility features (ramps, air conditioning, audio-visual announcement systems), which will significantly increase comfort and access for all passengers, including cyclists, and contribute to reducing local air pollution. At the same time, it is crucial to expand the dedicated infrastructure for personal mobility devices – bicycles, electric bicycles, and scooters – ensuring safe, well-connected, and easy-to-use routes so that residents can confidently opt for environmentally and community-friendly transport alternatives.

4. In flood-prone areas of Chișinău, such as the intersections of Ion Creangă, Ștefan cel Mare, and Calea Ieșilor, it is absolutely essential for the authorities to install modern storm drainage systems and expand or modernize existing infrastructure to cope with torrential rains. Such measures will allow for the rapid evacuation of rainwater, reducing the risk of flash floods that block traffic and cause damage to homes and businesses. In a context where climate change is leading to an increase in the frequency and intensity of rainfall, strengthening the urban drainage system is becoming a priority in order to adapt to the new climate realities. There is also a need for a systematic program to rehabilitate and maintain the city's waterways. Although a section of the Bîc River in central Chișinău has recently been cleaned up and its banks reinforced, these isolated actions are not enough. All rivers and streams crossing the city must be cleaned periodically and their embankments reinforced to ensure efficient drainage of rainwater and prevent blockages that can lead to flooding. These interventions should be part of an integrated urban flood management strategy that also includes nature-based solutions, such as the development of retention basins, permeable surfaces, and green spaces that slow down water runoff. This will enable Chișinău to respond more effectively to the challenges posed by climate change, protecting infrastructure, residents, and the urban environment.
5. Improving transport accessibility for women and persons with disabilities is a key priority for equitable and inclusive mobility. One measure with a direct impact is the introduction of subsidized public transport for women, especially those from low-income households, thereby facilitating access to jobs, healthcare, and education. To enhance safety, authorities should install effective public lighting and surveillance cameras in transport stations and on pedestrian routes, so that every citizen feels protected regardless of the time of day. Sidewalk upgrades should be a priority in all neighborhoods, including ramps for people with limited mobility, tactile paving for the visually impaired individuals, and uniform lighting to prevent accidents. The implementation of adapted traffic signaling systems – including audible and visual traffic lights, as well as tactile markings at pedestrian crossings – will facilitate orientation for people with disabilities. Crosswalks should not only be well marked, but also strategically located, equipped with accessible ramps on both sides, and properly lit to increase visibility and safety for all residents. Such investments will not only encourage greater use of public transport, but will also help reduce dependence on private cars, create a safer and healthier urban environment, and strengthen social cohesion.

For central public authorities

1. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, together with the Ministry of Energy, must place the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) powered exclusively by renewable energy sources at the center of their policies as an essential solution for reducing air pollution and promoting better public health in the Republic of Moldova. To achieve this transformation, it is crucial to develop an extensive national network of accessible charging stations, covering not only urban centers and major national roads, but also rural areas, so that every citizen can adopt electric transport without barriers. Without a well-developed charging infrastructure, the expansion of the electric vehicle fleet will be slowed down, and Moldova will face difficulties in achieving its targets for sustainable mobility and reducing harmful emissions. At the same time, attractive financial incentives need to be introduced, such as direct subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles, significant tax reductions, excise duty exemptions, and low-interest loan programs for both individuals and companies. These measures will facilitate widespread access to electric technology, encourage investment in the sector, and accelerate the transition to green transport, with tangible benefits for the environment, the economy, and public health.
2. The Ministry of Energy must accelerate this green transition by significantly expanding renewable energy production capacity in the Republic of Moldova, so that electric vehicles are powered exclusively by clean energy, not fossil fuels. An ambitious investment strategy in solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects is needed, inspired by successful regional examples such as the 400 MW solar park in North Macedonia. To achieve these goals, Moldova must leverage international financing and develop public-private partnerships, thereby facilitating the implementation of large-scale renewable energy projects. This approach will reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuel imports, stimulate the creation of green jobs, and strengthen national energy security. In addition, the adoption of clean energy will help Moldova in fulfilling its commitments to the European Union on combating climate change and boost economic growth through innovation and sustainable technologies.
3. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development is responsible for ensuring that interurban and regional transport services are fully adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and women, especially those who travel long distances for work, medical care, or education. To this end, it is imperative that buses and minibuses connecting localities be equipped with low floors and ramps for wheelchair users, reserved seats for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and the elderly, as well as audio and visual announcement systems for passengers with hearing or visual impairments. At the same time, interurban transport hubs and bus stations must be equipped with effective public lighting and enhanced security measures to ensure the protection of women traveling alone. As part of the upgrades, accessible toilets and breastfeeding facilities should be installed in main terminals, providing greater comfort and accessibility for women and families.

4. Collecting and using sex-disaggregated data should become standard practice in public transport planning. All user surveys, passenger counts, and feedback systems should record information by sex, as well as other relevant categories such as age, disability, and location. This data will provide a solid basis for informed decision-making. For example, including specific questions about women's mobility patterns, perceptions of safety, and needs in annual questionnaires will help identify and address real issues. At the budget allocation stage, there is a need to apply gender-responsive budgeting – that is, the inclusion of gender-disaggregated performance indicators (e.g., the percentage of women who consider public transport accessible, the number of women benefiting from subsidies, etc.) and the targeting of funds to address identified gaps. The current lack of such data in Moldova's transport budgets makes it difficult to assess the extent to which women's needs are being met. To overcome this gap, each major transport project or policy should be accompanied by an analysis of its impact on women compared to men. Planning agencies should also use modern tools such as GIS mapping combined with demographic data to identify areas where women or vulnerable groups have limited access to transport, so that investments can be prioritized in these areas (e.g., new bus routes or street lighting). Integrating this data will enable the development of evidence-based policies that better respond to the distinct needs of women. Planners will be able to see, for example, whether women in certain neighborhoods avoid public transport in the evening due to safety concerns, which will lead to the implementation of concrete measures such as additional lighting or adjustments to the traffic schedule. In the long term, this approach will contribute to increased accessibility and satisfaction for women who use public transport by adjusting routes and services to their actual commuting and mobility patterns, thereby strengthening equitable and inclusive urban mobility.
5. Promoting greater participation and representation of women in all categories of jobs in the transport sector – from bus and taxi drivers to engineers, technicians, and managers – is crucial to creating a transport system that is equitable and tailored to the real needs of users. A strategic approach would be to set clear employment targets or minimum quotas for women in public transport companies and projects, such as ensuring that at least 30% of new hires in urban transit operations are women, with the intention of progressively increasing this percentage as the working environment becomes more inclusive. Achieving these targets requires concrete support measures: allocating dedicated resources for training and certification programs specifically designed for women – for example, organizing free or subsidized courses for obtaining bus or truck driving licenses, as well as technical training in vehicle maintenance or traffic management. Collaboration between public transport companies, technical colleges, and universities to offer scholarships and internships to young women interested in transport and STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) professions will stimulate their interest and access to a career in the field. It is also necessary to run information and recruitment campaigns that combat gender stereotypes, highlighting examples of successful women as train conductors, pilots, or transit managers, as well as launching mentoring programs within transport agencies so that women can advance to leadership positions. In addition, gender criteria should be integrated into public procurement and service contracts: operators that demonstrate a real commitment to recruiting and supporting women, as well as to ensuring a safe and inclusive

working environment, should receive additional points or bonuses when contracts are awarded. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, should support these initiatives by setting clear sectoral targets and allocating dedicated funds. At the same time, transport operators (such as RTEC Chișinău or private bus companies) should implement their own recruitment and training programs in collaboration with educational institutions and vocational training centers to develop curricula tailored to women interested in careers in transport. In the long term, the increasing visibility of professional women – whether they are drivers, station managers, or traffic officers – will help change social perceptions and attract even more women to these professions. Thus, increasing gender equality in the sector will lead to the development of a more responsive public transport system that is better adapted to the needs of all citizens, promoting equity, social cohesion, and inclusive urban mobility.

For national policymakers and decision-makers

1. Road Transport Code No. 150 of July 17, 2014 includes anti-discrimination principles, but does lacks clear and specific sanctions for violations of these principles in the field of road transport. For example, if an operator discriminates against a passenger on the basis of gender, disability, or other grounds, the law does not explicitly state what penalties they face – responsibility is most likely transferred to other legislation, such as the Law on Ensuring Equality or general rules on administrative offenses. In order to increase the effectiveness and applicability of these principles, it would be necessary to introduce explicit provisions referring to specific sanctions, such as fines imposed by the competent authorities or administrative measures, including the suspension of the operator's license in cases of serious or repeated discrimination. In addition, the complaint process should be clearly regulated: transport operators should be required to make accessible channels available to the public for reporting cases of discrimination and to inform passengers of their rights, thus facilitating the reporting and prompt resolution of incidents. Such an approach would strengthen the effective protection of passengers and ensure the effective application of the principles of equality in road transport.
2. Currently, the provision of transport facilities for vulnerable groups (such as persons with disabilities or pensioners) depends on the decision of district councils, which leads to significant inequalities between different regions: in some districts, persons with disabilities can benefit from discounts or free transport, while in others access to such facilities is limited or non-existent. To ensure fairness and equal treatment nationwide, it is necessary to establish mandatory minimum standards applicable throughout the country. For example, it could be stipulated that all persons with severe disabilities and their companions are guaranteed a substantial discount or even free interurban transport, with the costs covered by the state budget or special dedicated funds. The implementation of such a measure would eliminate territorial discrepancies, ensure uniform access to transport for all vulnerable citizens, and contribute to the consolidation of a unified and inclusive legislative framework at the national level.

3. Although the Road Transport Code explicitly prohibits the refusal of passengers with disabilities and requires accessibility in bus terminals, it does not define clear technical standards for accessible vehicles. There are no provisions regarding the mandatory equipping of buses with wheelchair ramps, dedicated seats, or adapted information systems (audio and visual) – facilities that are indispensable for persons with disabilities to be able to use public transport autonomously and efficiently. For real change, it is necessary to introduce minimum accessibility requirements for all newly purchased or modernized means of transport, as well as to set clear deadlines for adjusting existing fleets to these standards, thus ensuring true inclusion. Furthermore, the Code does not address staff training (drivers, attendants) in assisting passengers with special needs. The implementation of mandatory training programs – focused on appropriate communication with persons with disabilities and the correct handling of assistive equipment – would guarantee the effective application of legal rights and transform public transport into a welcoming space for all citizens, regardless of their needs.

